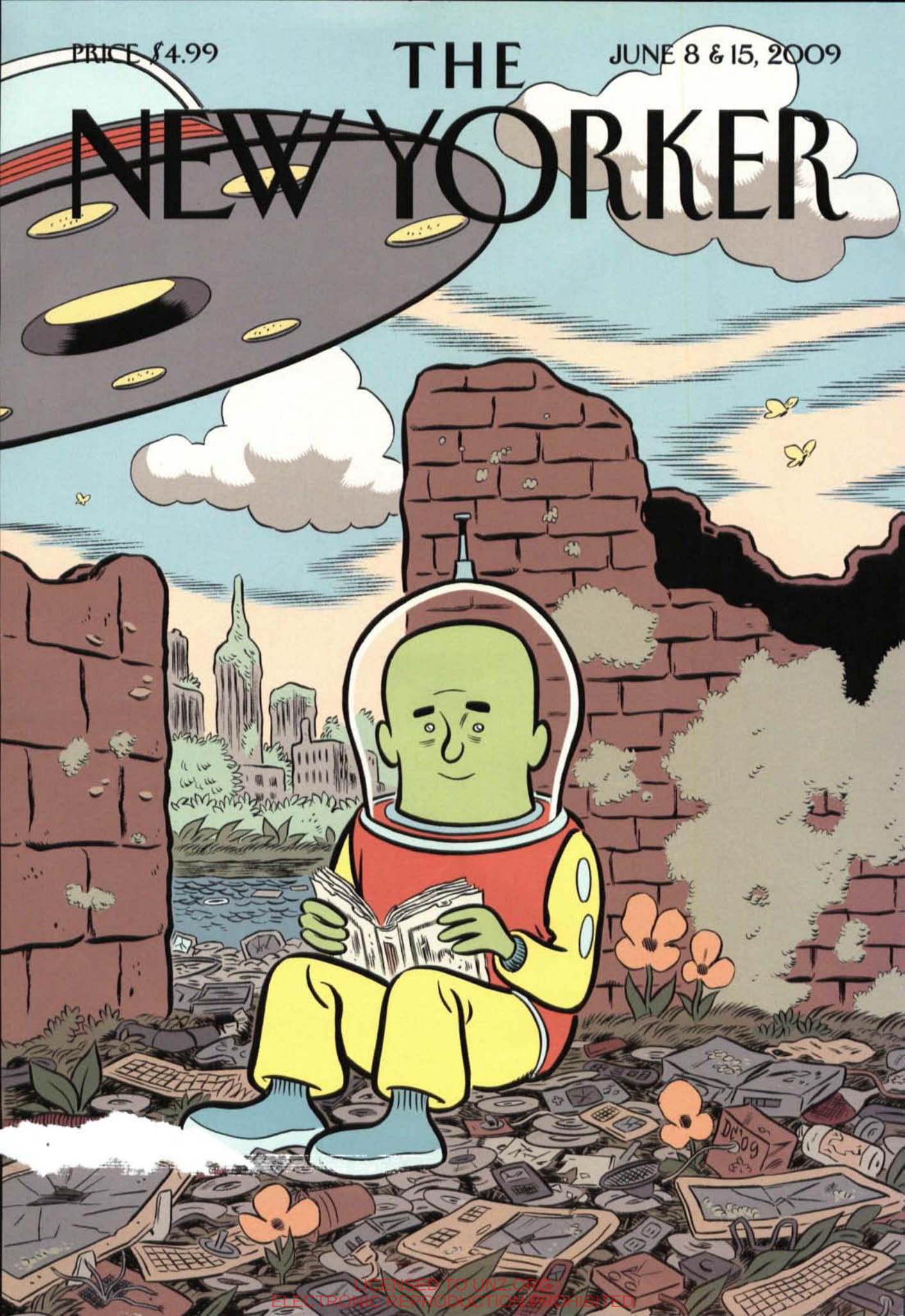


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14 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

37 THE TALK OF THE TOWN

*Jeffrey Toobin on Sonia Sotomayor;
James Surowiecki on an unusual crisis.*

Téa Obreht 44 DÉBUT FICTION
"The Tiger's Wife"

Edna O'Brien 56 FICTION
"Old Wounds"

David Grossman 66 LIFE AND LETTERS
The Age of Genius
What was it like to know Bruno Schulz?

Jonathan Franzen 78 FICTION
"Good Neighbors"

R. Crumb 90 COMIC STRIP
"The Book of Genesis"

SUMMER READING

Yiyun Li 55 "A Soldier Home"
Roger Angell 65 "Two Emmas"
Aleksandar Hemon 83 "The Magic Mountain"

THE CRITICS

Nancy Franklin 102 ON TELEVISION
"Nurse Jackie."

Louis Menand 106 A CRITIC AT LARGE
Can you teach creative writing?

113 BOOKS
Briefly Noted

Sasha Frere-Jones 114 POP MUSIC
Hypnotic Brass Ensemble.

Alex Ross 117 MUSICAL EVENTS
A Mahler marathon.

Continued on page 6

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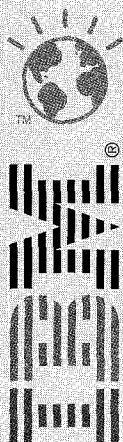
What's the window of opportunity on an opportunity?

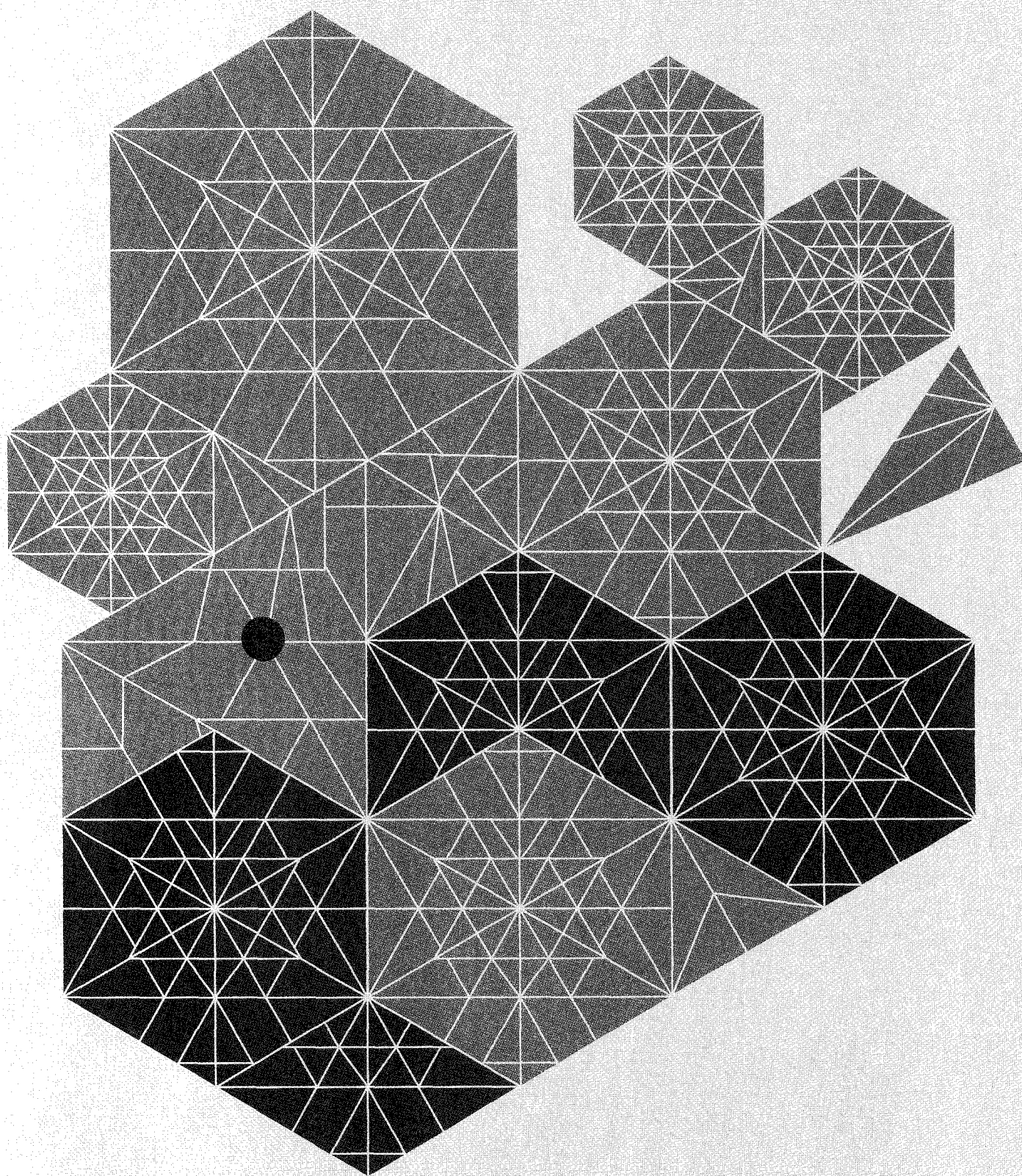
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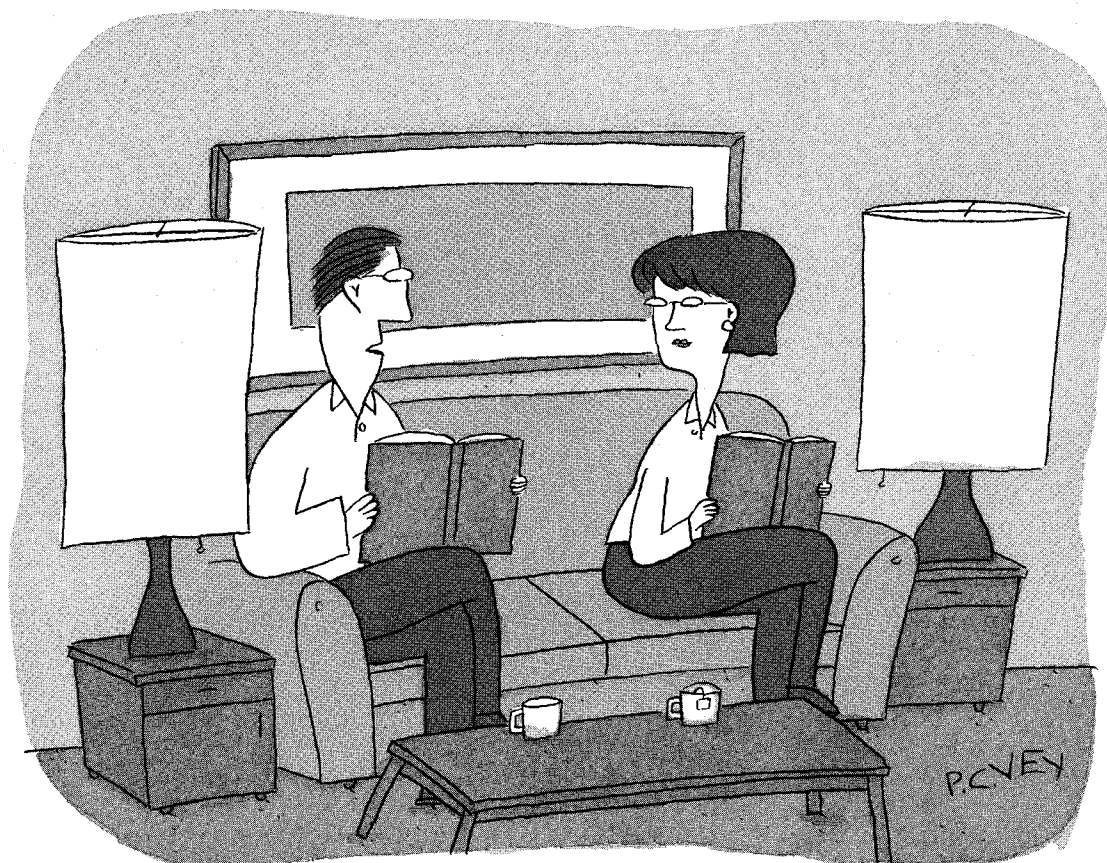
<i>Hilton Als</i>	119	THE THEATRE <i>"Vieux Carré."</i>
<i>David Denby</i>	121	THE CURRENT CINEMA <i>"Up," "Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian," "Away We Go."</i>

		POEMS
<i>Sherman Alexie</i>	48	"Survivorman"
<i>Ada Limón</i>	71	"Crush"
<i>Stephen Dunn</i>	86	"Don't Do That"

<i>Dan Clowes</i>	COVER
	"Future Generations"

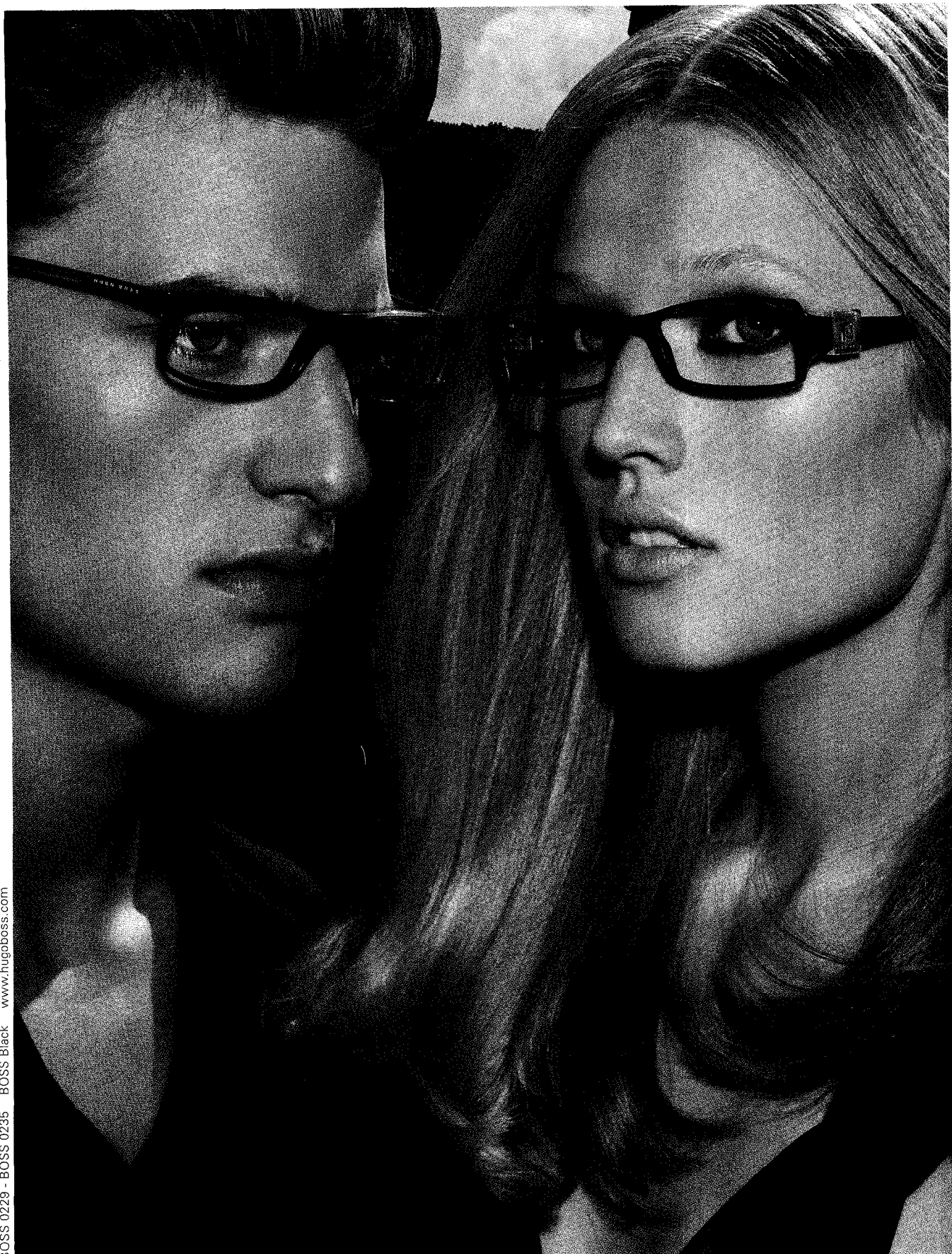
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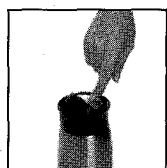
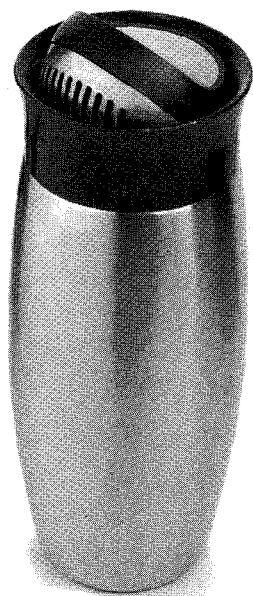
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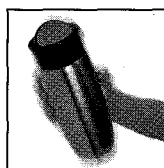
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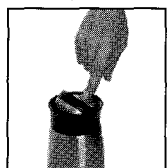
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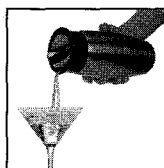
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CONTRIBUTORS

Téa Obreht ("The Tiger's Wife," p. 44) recently completed her M.F.A. at Cornell. Her first novel will be published in 2010.

Jeffrey Toobin (Comment, p. 37) won the 2008 J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize for "The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court," which is available in paperback.

Ian Frazier (The Talk of the Town, p. 41) has been writing for the magazine since 1974. His new book, "Travels in Siberia," will be published next year.

Sherman Alexie (Poem, p. 48) recently published "Face," a poetry collection. "War Dances," a book of short stories, will be published in October.

Yiyun Li ("A Soldier Home," p. 55) is the author of "A Thousand Years of Good Prayers" and "The Vagrants," which came out in February.

Roger Angell ("Two Emmas," p. 65) has been a fiction editor at the magazine since 1956.

David Grossman ("The Age of Genius," p. 66) is the author of more than twenty books, including "The Yellow Wind," "See Under: Love," and a number of children's books.

Jonathan Franzen ("Good Neighbors," p. 78) is the author of "The Discomfort Zone: A Personal History" and "How to Be Alone." His most recent contribution to the magazine was a reported piece about the environmental crisis in China.

Edna O'Brien ("Old Wounds," p. 56), a novelist, short-story writer, and biographer, has a new book, "Byron in Love: A Short Daring Life," coming out this month. Her play "Haunted" has just premiered in England.

Ada Limón (Poem, p. 71) is the author of "Lucky Wreck" and "This Big Fake World." Her third book of poems, "Sharks in the Rivers," is due out next year.

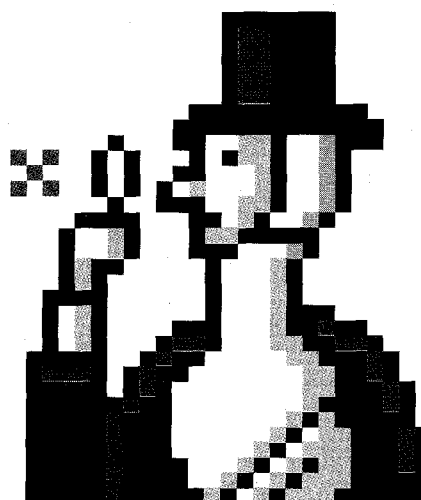
Aleksandar Hemon ("The Magic Mountain," p. 83) has published four books of fiction, including "Love and Obstacles," a collection of short stories, which came out last month.

R. Crumb (Comic Strip, p. 90) is a frequent contributor. His illustrated version of the Book of Genesis will be published by Norton in October.

Louis Menand (A Critic at Large, p. 106) is a professor of English at Harvard. He has a new book, "The Marketplace of Ideas," coming out later this year.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Audio: *Jonathan Franzen* reads stories by *Ian Frazier* and *Veronica Geng*; *Louis Menand* on creative-writing programs; *Dorothy Wickenden* hosts the Political Scene, a weekly roundtable. / Editors and writers of the Summer Fiction Issue take readers' questions. / Video: *Richard Brody's* DVD of the week; cityscapes by *Jorge Colombo*. / The Book Club reads Wendell Steavenson's "The Weight of a Mustard Seed." / Blogs: *Hendrik Hertzberg* on politics, *Amy Davidson* on the day's news, *James Surowiecki* on the economy, and more. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a complete archive of issues, back to 1925.



THE MAIL

EFFORT AND ABILITY

Malcolm Gladwell explains how underdogs succeed strikingly when they “innovate” by violating social norms or leveraging extraordinary effort (“How David Beats Goliath,” May 11th). But in some of his examples the underdogs simply define “success” differently (winning youth basketball games versus developing long-term basketball players). And there is some danger in adopting a philosophy of achieving short-term goals at the expense of the organization’s long-term health. Of course, guerrilla armies and startup companies have little to lose—they either win or die, so the lesson for them is clear. But should those lessons be applied to the rest of us? Real innovation lies not in David-like strategies but in recognizing the right contexts in which to use them. We must hope such contexts are the exception and not the rule. I recently watched a youth soccer league in Florida where several of the coaches guaranteed victory by having three players stand stock still in front of the small pop-up goals, completely blocking the net for the entire forty-minute game. The players were six years old. The coaches might be considered innovative, but by any measure the game was destroyed for those three players, and arguably for everyone else as well.

*Ben Jacobson
Chicago, Ill.*

Contrary to Malcolm Gladwell’s thesis, a full-court press in basketball is more likely to be employed by the Goliaths than by the Davids. This is why some junior leagues have a rule that requires a pressing team to drop the press once that team gains a ten-point lead. On the college level, John Wooden used the press to help talent-laden U.C.L.A. win several national championships in the nineteen-sixties. And, before that, Ed Jucker used a three-quarter-court press at Cincinnati to win two national championships when he had the best guard tandem in the country, Tony Yates and Tom Thacker. Rick Pitino’s Kentucky

team was also the Goliath when it used the press to annihilate L.S.U. in 1995. Dale Brown’s L.S.U. team had a losing season every year between 1994 and 1997, while Kentucky was 28–5 in 1994–95 and 34–2 in 1995–96, when it won a national championship.

*Michael O’Connell
Baraboo, Wis.*

Gladwell uses the battle at Aqaba between the Ottomans and Lawrence of Arabia and his ragtag Bedouins as an example of a dominant power successfully being challenged by an underdog. However, in the larger conflict, the Ottomans were the underdogs. Lawrence’s Bedouins were armed and paid by the world’s industrial and military superpower, the British, and served as just one piece of a global strategy that the Ottomans could not dream of matching. The British had the capability to pour huge, technologically sophisticated armies deep into the heartlands of the Ottoman state. And, while the Bedouins’ role in ripping up some rail lines should not go without mention, neither should Britain’s vast armies, including the hundreds of thousands of Indian and other non-British troops, who were the real reason the Ottomans lost. We must take into account as well Britain’s Navy, the world’s most formidable, which was able to channel resources to the Ottomans’ western border, allowing Lawrence’s Arabs to be resupplied without the possibility of Ottoman interference. It is rather a case of an Ottoman David versus a British Goliath, except that the British added their own David to keep things interesting.

*Haroon Moghul
Director of Public Relations
The Islamic Center at
New York University*

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FROM THE AUTHOR OF
CARTER BEATS THE DEVIL

**Charlie Chaplin
takes center stage in the
“big, engaging novel”***

Sunnyside

**“GLEN DAVID GOLD is
a masterful, even heart-
stopping storyteller.”**

—ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

“Brilliant... Magnificent

...offers a wealth of wit, pathos and insight.” —WASHINGTON POST

**“A breathless stupendous
novel that re-creates
a young brash America**

...Gold proves himself yet again to be the hungriest craftiest funniest and most humane novelist we have.” —JUNOT DIAZ

***“Gold is a spellbinder**

...Re-creates time periods as E. L. Doctorow did in RAGTIME. [The book has] wonderful Dickensian qualities, namely, the capacity to startle, to thrill, to evoke laughter and, ultimately, to bring tears to the eyes.” —LOS ANGELES TIMES

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■ WHEN THE BUSINESS HE OWNS WENT INTO TEMPORARY SHUTDOWN, WE HELPED KEEP HIS DREAMS UP AND RUNNING.

Mike Guthrie owns a factory that makes RV chassis in Detroit. It was the business that was going to fund his and his wife's retirements, and be a legacy for their children. The economic downturn hit hard, but they were ready. "Fortunately, we had a sound strategy going in."

The Guthries, with the help of their Merrill Lynch Financial Advisor Aubrey Lee, have been preparing for years. "We've worked very closely with Aubrey to try to understand the macro factors that impact the market. He's been a source of a great deal of information."

Even when the factory is in temporary shutdown, Mike's dreams are up and running. Learn how a Merrill Lynch Financial Advisor can help you today at totalmerrill.com



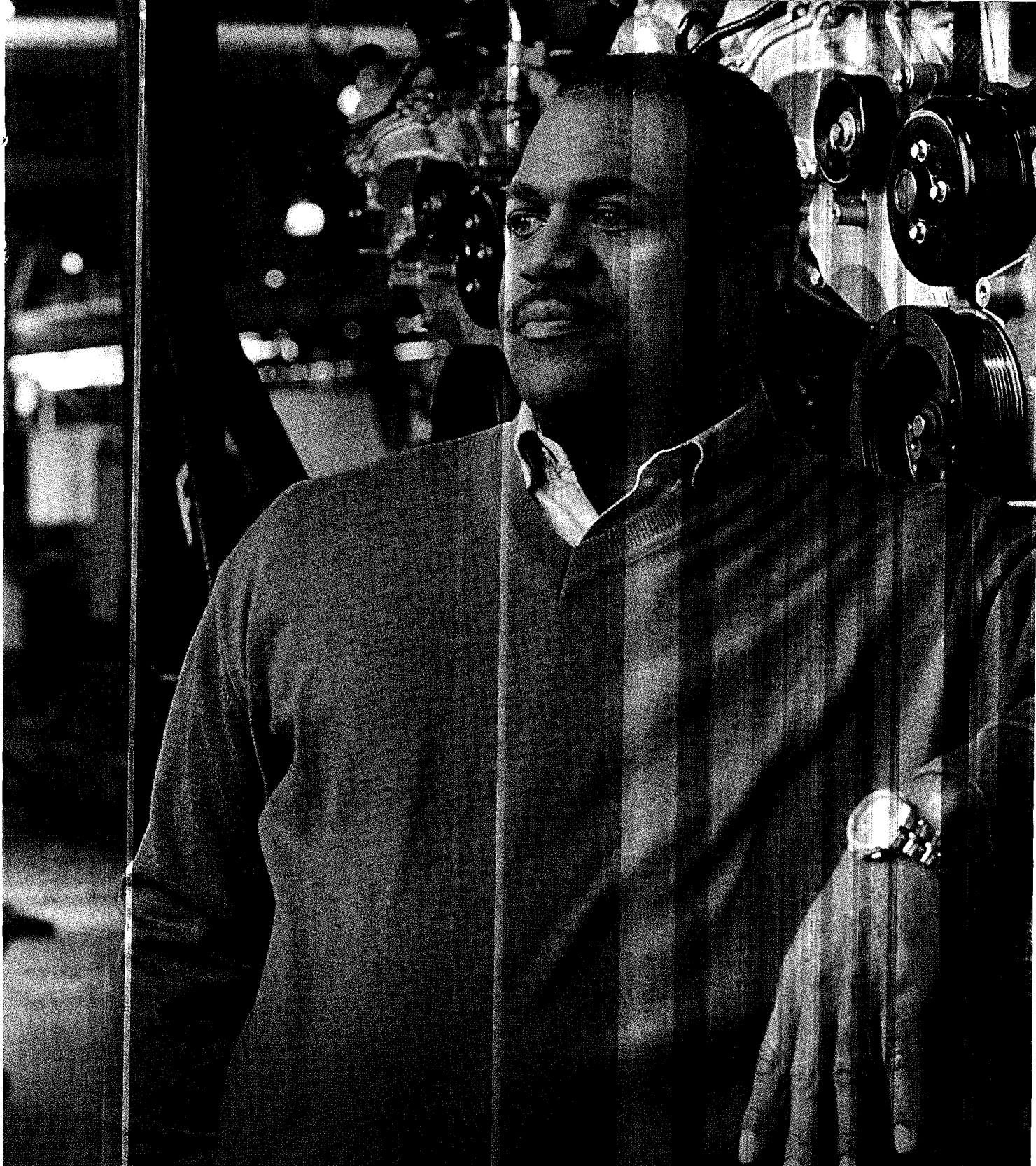
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Global Wealth Management

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Are Not Bank Guaranteed	Are Not FDIC Insured	May Lose Value
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16				

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE WAR STORIES

Suzan-Lori Parks's latest drama, "Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 8 & 9)," concludes the Public LAB season. Parks, who is the Public's Master Writer Chair, also acts in her play as the Narrator, leading the audience through multiple stories, including one involving a slave awaiting the return of her Civil War soldier husband and another about a present-day military officer preparing for his death. Jo Bonney directs. (See page 16.)

NIGHT LIFE HEAVEN SENT

The guitarist Gary Lucas, who has worked with everyone from Captain Beefheart to Leonard Bernstein and has played everything from edgy jazz to nineteen-thirties Chinese pop, has kept his driving rock band, Gods and Monsters, together through it all. He celebrates the group's twentieth anniversary at the Gramercy Theatre. (See page 17.)

ART FOREIGN EXCHANGE

It's been four hundred years since Manhattan Island was

claimed as a territory by Holland. The Museum of the City of New York marks the occasion with "Dutch Seen: New York Rediscovered," an exhibition of contemporary images of the city by thirteen Dutch-born photographers. (See page 21.)

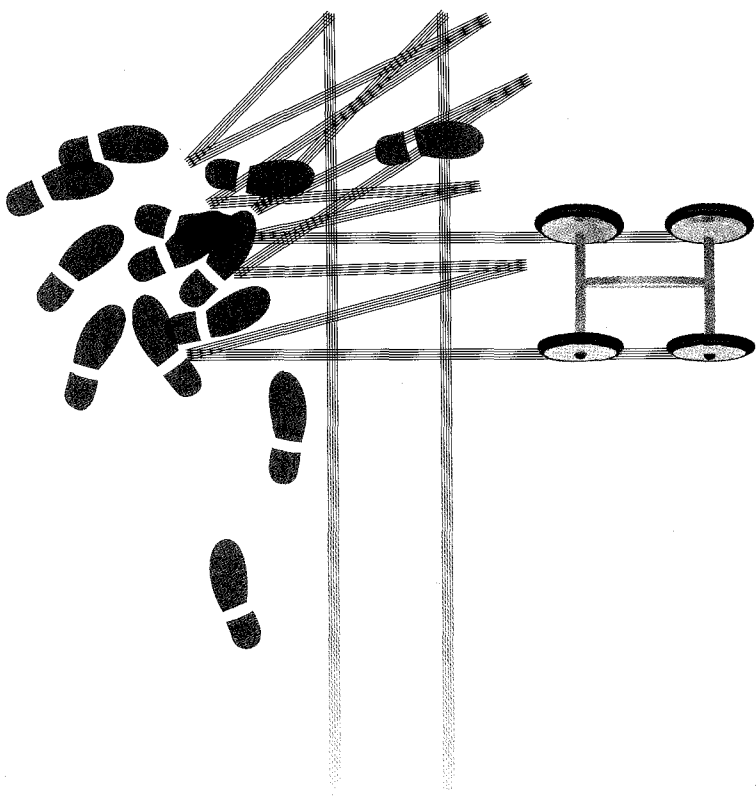
CLASSICAL MUSIC VINTAGE WYNER

The composer Yehudi Wyner, who won the Rome Prize in 1953, has retained his strong lyrical gifts. This week, the New York Virtuoso Singers give him an eightieth-birthday present by performing all his major choral works. (See page 26.)

MOVIES RIGHTS AND WRONGS

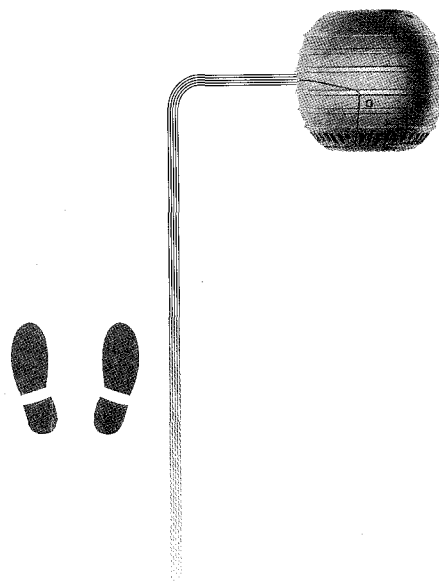
This year's edition of the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, at the Film Society of Lincoln Center, focusses on solving crises in hot spots around the world. "In the Holy Fire of Revolution" is a portrait of Garry Kasparov, the former chess champion and now a democracy activist in Russia, and "Crude" details environmental advocates' battle against Chevron over pollution in Ecuador. (See page 31.)

The American Contemporary Music Ensemble. Photograph by Lisa Kereszi.



**A vacuum with wheels
makes you go back
and forth.**

Vacuums still have wheels that make it hard
work to move around objects and unnecessarily
difficult to vacuum in corners.

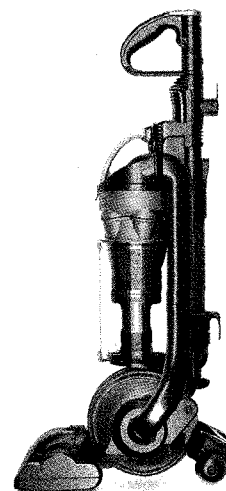


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THE THEATRE OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AMERICAS OFF BROADWAY

A festival of plays produced by American regional companies. Waterwell's "#9" starts previews June 5 and opens June 11. "Fubar," by Karl Gajdusek, from Washington, D.C.'s Project Y, starts previews June 11 and opens June 16. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE AMISH PROJECT

Sarah Cameron Sunde directs this solo show written and performed by Jessica Dickey, a fictional take on an actual shooting at an Amish school. Previews begin June 4. Opens June 10. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

CLUBBED THUMB / SUMMERWORKS 2009

The fourteenth annual festival of new plays includes "Punkplay," written by Gregory Moss and directed by Davis McCallum, and "Precious Little," written by Madeleine George and directed by Hal Brooks. Opens June 7. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-352-3101.)

DASTANGOI: THE ADVENTURES OF AMIR HAMZA

As part of the "Muslim Voices" festival, this tale of the Prophet Muhammad's uncle is told through *dastangoi*, a form of traditional Urdu storytelling. In Urdu, with English subtitles. June 7-8. (Asia Society, 725 Park Ave., at 70th St. 212-517-2742.)

DOV AND ALI

Katherine Kovner directs this drama by Anna Ziegler, about racial and religious tensions at a Detroit high school. Previews begin June 5. Opens June 12. (Cherry Lane Studio, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS (PARTS 1, 8 & 9)

Concluding the Public LAB season is the world premiere of a new play by, and featuring, Suzan-Lori Parks. Jo Bonney directs the multilayered tale, which encompasses slaves in the Civil War and a present-day general who is dying. Opens June 5. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES

HERE Arts Center presents this satire of technological advancement, written and performed by Quinn Bauriedel, Trey Lyford, and Geoff Sobelle. Aleksandra Wolska directs. In previews. Opens June 6. (145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Moose Hall Theatre Company presents the Shakespeare play outdoors, free of charge. Ted Minos directs. Opens June 3. (Inwood Hill Park Peninsula, enter at Indian Rd. and W. 218th St. 212-567-5255.)

NEXT FALL

Naked Angels presents the world premiere of a new comedy by Geoffrey Nauffts, about a Christian who saves an atheist from choking. Opens June 3. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

A NIGHT WITH WALT WHITMAN

Basil Twist curates two puppetry works based on the life of the poet: Bart Buch's "Ode to Walt Whitman" and Brian Selznick's "Live Oak, with Moss." June 3-7. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

OUR HOUSE

Michael Mayer directs the New York premiere of a dark comedy by Theresa Rebeck, about a news anchor who becomes the star of a reality show. In previews. Opens June 9. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

RICHARD III: AN ARAB TRAGEDY

Kuwait's Sabab/Sulayman Al-Bassam Theatre presents a new version of Shakespeare's tragedy, adapted and directed by Sulayman Al-Bassam, as part of the "Muslim Voices" festival. In Arabic, with

English supertitles. June 9-12. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

STRANGERS

Ontological-Hysteric Incubator presents a new play from the Shalimar, written by Nastaran Ahmadi, about a green-card marriage. Shoshona Carrier directs. In previews. Opens June 4. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-352-3101.)

STUNNING

LCT3 presents a drama by David Adjmi, about a young Syrian-Jewish woman in Brooklyn who marries a much older man. Anne Kauffman directs. In previews. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

THINGS OF DRY HOURS

Naomi Wallace wrote this play, about a black Sunday-school teacher who gives shelter to a white refugee. Delroy Lindo and Roslyn Ruff star; Ruben Santiago-Hudson directs. In previews. Opens June 8. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-460-5475.)

TIN PAN ALLEY RAG

Roundabout Theatre Company presents a new musical, written by Mark Saltzman, about a fictional meeting between Irving Berlin and Scott Joplin, featuring the music of both. Stafford Arima directs. Previews begin June 12. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

TWELFTH NIGHT

Anne Hathaway stars as Viola in the Shakespeare comedy, the season opener for Shakespeare in the Park. The cast also includes Audra McDonald, Michael Cumpsty, Raúl Esparza, Julie White, Hamish Linklater, David Pittu, and Jay O. Sanders. Daniel Sullivan directs. Previews begin June 10. (Delacorte, Central Park, enter at 81st St. and Central Park W. For information, call 212-539-8750.)

THE WIZ

Thomas Kail ("In the Heights") directs and Andy Blankenbuehler choreographs this Encores! Summer Stars production of the 1974 musical, based on the Frank Baum story. Ashanti, LaChanze, and Orlando Jones star. Previews begin June 12. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

NOW PLAYING

CORALINE

Stephin Merritt, of the Magnetic Fields, wrote the music and lyrics for this musical, and David Green-span wrote the book, based on the novel by Neil Gaiman, about a bored, lonely girl who steps into a fantasy world. Jayne Houdyshell stars in the title role. Leigh Silverman directs the MCC Theatre production. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

KING LEAR

In Central Park, New York Classical Theatre celebrates its tenth anniversary with the Shakespeare tragedy, directed by Stephen Burdman. As in years past, the audience follows the show, on foot, around the Park. Also, it's free. (Enter at 103rd St. and Central Park W. 212-252-4531.)

MAKE ME

At Atlantic Theatre Company, a new comedy by Leslie Ayvazian, about three couples whose relationships are in jeopardy. Christian Parker directs. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 212-279-4200. Through June 14.)

MARATHON 2009

This year's festival of new work, presented by the Ensemble Studio Theatre, includes plays by Billy Aronson, Leslie Ayvazian, Jeanne Dorsey, and Garrett M. Brown. (549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101.)

NIGHT SKY

Daniella Topol directs a play by Susan Yankowitz, about an astronomer who develops aphasia following a car accident. (Nagelberg Theatre, Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 212-352-3101.)

PURE CONFIDENCE

On the surface of this seemingly old-fashioned narrative (part of 59E59's "Americas Off Broadway" festival, from Minneapolis's Mixed Blood Theatre), Simon (Gavin Lawrence), a slave, who is also the

best jockey in the South in 1861, convinces a sympathetic racehorse owner (Chris Mulkey) to buy him so that he can, in turn, eventually buy his freedom and that of his bride-to-be. Unexpectedly, the friendly relationship between the two men is made much more complex by the arrangement. The enjoyably hammy and charming summer-stock-style production contains glimmers of insight into the depths of the master-slave relationship and the realities of freedom. (59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE RIVALRY

A flag-draped stage recalls the hustings of old in this revival of Norman Corwin's 1959 play, about the debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas during their 1858 race for the U.S. Senate. When the candidates are actually debating, the evening is interesting enough as a historical primer, if not as drama. Peter Cormican (as the overweening Douglas) and Christian Kauffmann (as the folksy firebrand Lincoln) do their subjects justice, and their arguments about the spread of slavery and "Negro equality" would have resonated during the struggle for civil rights; still, even two fine performances can't make a play out of material that's better suited to a dramatic reading. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THE SUCCESS OF FAILURE (OR, THE FAILURE OF SUCCESS)

In the first part of Cynthia Hopkins's post-apocalyptic multimedia piece (the last work in her "Accidental Trilogy"), the thirty-six-year-old writer-performer plays an alcoholic astronaut—with a great singing voice and the guts to do wonky little dances—who is ordered to single-handedly stop an invading alien species from blowing up the earth. She is torn: is the earth worth saving? In the second part, Hopkins plays herself, and analyzes, with a whiteboard and three slide projectors, the reasons she's compelled to transform the painful details of her life—including her alcoholism, her psychotic mania, her suicidal tendencies, and her mother's slow death—into fiction. The whole work is a confession, and, although original and artfully (if a little amateurishly) done, it feels more like self-involvement than like satisfying theatre. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through June 7.)

10 THINGS TO DO BEFORE I DIE

Vida (Natalie Venetia Belcon), a New York City high-school teacher who has recently begun to suffer from panic attacks, and her estranged sister, Nina (Tracie Thoms), a writer who is unable to keep her footing, come together to sift through the boxes that contain their meagre inheritance. The strongest scenes are Vida's monologues in front of her class and the dialogues between her and her prize student (Kyle Beltran), and the terrific interstitial jazzy hip-hop recordings, by the Broken Chord Collective, keep things lively. But Zakiyyah Alexander's play, directed by Jackson Gay, rarely coalesces into more than two separate stories. (McGinn/Cazale, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 212-246-4422. Through June 14.)

VIEUX CARRÉ

Austin Pendleton directs the Tennessee Williams play, set in a New Orleans boarding house. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Through June 14.)

Also Playing

ACCENT ON YOUTH: Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **AMERICAN HWANGAP:** The Wild Project, 195 E. 3rd St. 212-352-3101. Through June 7. **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BILLY ELIOT THE MUSICAL:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BLITHE SPIRIT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **EVERYDAY RAPTURE:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. Through June 13. **EXIT THE KING:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 14. **GOD OF CARNAGE:** Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **GROUNDWELL:** Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **GUYS AND DOLLS:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-307-4100. **HAIR: THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE-ROCK MUSICAL:** Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IN THE HEIGHTS:**

Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100. **IRENA'S VOW:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 14. **KRAPP, 39:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **MAMMA MIA!** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY STUART:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NEXT TO NORMAL:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **9 TO 5: THE MUSICAL:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE NORMAN CONQUESTS:** Circle in the Square, 235 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **OUR TOWN:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. **THE PHILANTHROPIST:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **REASONS TO BE PRETTY:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **ROCK OF AGES:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **RUINED:** City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **SHREK THE MUSICAL:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 39 STEPS:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TOXIC AVENGER:** New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **WAITING FOR GODOT:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **WEST SIDE STORY:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BEACON THEATRE

Broadway at 74th St. (800-745-3000)—June 9: The British rock goddess **P.J. Harvey** has reunited with the blues-tinged guitarist **John Parish**, her longtime collaborator. Their passionate new collection of tortured songs, "A Woman a Man Walked By," came out earlier this year.

THE BELL HOUSE

149 7th St., between Second and Third Aves., Brooklyn (718-643-6510)—June 12: Though they hail from the Pacific Northwest, home to noise merchants like the Melvins, Soundgarden, and Nirvana, the Posies developed a pristine, harmony-laden blend of power pop that owed more to acts like Big Star and the Beatles than to punk rock or heavy metal. Even so, the band recruited the underground rock producer Don Fleming for its 1993 album, "Frosting on the Beater," which combined lush melodies with thick guitars, and opened up a whole new audience for the band. Sixteen years later, the Posies will perform the watershed album in its entirety.

"BLARNEY STAR CONCERTS"

June 5: A night of fine Irish music with the flute player **Mike Rafferty**, the fiddler **Willie Kelly**, and the guitarist **Dónal Clancy** (who is Rafferty's son-in-law). (Glucksman Ireland House, New York University, 1 Washington Mews. 212-998-3950.)

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 11: **Todd Snider**, a rocking country-folk troubadour out of Oregon (and now based in East Nashville), takes a low-key, off-kilter approach in presenting his unique songs, masking a biting wit, some tenderness, and not a little anger. "You Got Away with It," from his 2006 album, "The Devil You Know," is sung in the voice of an old frat brother whose hell-raising buddy made it big in D.C. Snider's new album, "The Excitement Plan," includes "America's Favorite Pastime," a song that goes inside the head of the pitcher Dock Ellis, who, in 1970, tossed a no-hitter for the Pirates while, he claims, tripping on LSD. June 16-17: Since his professional debut, fronting Boston's Modern Lovers, in the early seventies, **Jonathan Richman** has carved out a special place in the rock universe, with songs that convey sweetness, manliness, naïveté, and humor. "Roadrunner," his seminal, two-chord proto-punk blaster,

was covered by Joan Jett and the Sex Pistols. But he has long since given up loud music, saying that he didn't want to hurt the ears of little babies.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!

Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 8: **David Byrne** performs songs that he recorded under the production helm of Brian Eno, including the iconoclastic music of his old band, the Talking Heads, and material from his albums "My Life in the Bush of Ghosts" and "Everything That Happens Will Happen Today." June 11: **Goran Bregovic**, a half-Serbian, half-Croatian Gypsy-music composer, comes to town with his impassioned band, the Weddings and Funerals Orchestra. Bregovic wrote the classic themes for Emir Kusturica's films "Underground" and "Time of the Gypsies," and, like his peers in cinematic music Nino Rota and Ennio Morricone, he writes scores that are so powerful that it's far easier to imagine the music without the movie than the other way around.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE

Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 5: **TV on the Radio** and the **Dirty Projectors**, two of the brightest and most idiosyncratic groups in the local rock scene, share a bill in a benefit concert for this summer music series. TV on the Radio's studio albums are complex affairs, merging alternative rock with Prince-like rhythms and flourishes of electronica. The group's live performances tend to adopt a simpler sonic approach, emphasizing the moving theatrics of the singer Tunde Adebimpe. The Dirty Projectors, with David Longstrech as the lead singer, guitarist, and "musical director," employ minimalist rhythms and unusual vocal harmonies, to powerful effect.

DEATH BY AUDIO

49 S. 2nd St., Brooklyn (No phone)—June 12: The Brooklynites **These Are Powers** take the stage with material from their new album, "All Aboard Future." While their previous recordings reflected an anxious instability, "All Aboard" confidently steps forward into a new engagement with electronic percussion while keeping a foot in spectral dub and tribal skree, producing what they call "ghost punk."

GRAMERCY THEATRE

127 E. 23rd St. (877-598-8694)—June 11: **Gods and Monsters** is the rock outlet for the maverick ex-Captain Beefheart guitarist Gary Lucas. While the ever-shifting ensemble has included such names as Matthew Sweet and the late Jeff Buckley (Lucas co-wrote his hit "Grace"), the current incarnation features the former Television drummer Billy Ficca and the onetime Modern Lovers bassist Ernie Brooks, making the band an underground-rock fan's dream team. For this show, celebrating the group's twentieth anniversary, Lucas will be joined by a number of guests, including **Alan Vega**, **Lenny Kaye**, and **Peter Stampfel**, to perform warmup duets.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 13: **Pierre de Gaillande** is a French-American indie-rockers with an abiding love for the mid-twentieth-century French singer-songwriter Georges Brassens. His latest group, the prosaically named Georges Brassens Translation Project, is a musical tribute to this lyrical master, who was known for his anarchist leanings and his biting, humorous songs. De Gaillande, who plays guitar and sings, has faithfully translated Brassens's lyrics into English, preserving both their raunchiness and their defiance. (One of Brassens's most notorious works was "Le Gorille," an anti-death-penalty song about a gorilla who sodomizes a judge.) For this performance, he'll be backed by a superb band that includes Tony Jarvis, on guitar and bass clarinet; David Spinley, on clarinet; and Quentin Jennings, on charango.

(LE) POISSON ROUGE

158 Bleecker St. (212-796-0741)—June 6: **Dean Wareham** and **Britta Phillips**, who record and perform as **Dean and Britta**, are dedicated cinephiles. "L'Avventura," their 2003 record of covers and duets, took its name from the Antonioni classic, and they have written scores for several films (including Noah Baumbach's "The Squid and the Whale"). Recently, they were commissioned by the Andy Warhol Museum to provide music for "Screen

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK MAJOR MIXUP

Wesley (Diplo) Pentz and Dave (Switch)

Taylor received Grammy nominations last year for their work on M.I.A.'s "Paper Planes," the hit collage based on the Clash's "Straight to Hell." They now work as a



team called Major Lazer, whose primary source material is dancehall. Their debut album, "Guns Don't Kill People ... Lazars Do," uses bona-fide dancehall vocalists like Mr. Lex and Busy Signal, and some songs even sound like vintage reggae from the eighties. But then there are the left turns that set the genre on its ear: the bass line from Black Flag's "Six Pack," the sound of a crying baby, run through the warble of Auto-Tune software. Make your own decision about the purported leader of the team. According to Mad Decent, the record label, Major Lazer is a Jamaican commando who fought in the "secret Zombie War of 1984" and lost both arms in combat. Then the U.S. military equipped him with experimental lasers that double as prosthetic limbs. I have an odd feeling that he won't show up when Diplo and Switch, plus guests, play S.O.B.'s on June 13.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

Tests," Warhol's mid-sixties experimentation with filmic portraiture, which scrutinized Edie Sedgwick, Lou Reed, Dennis Hopper, and others. The pair's songs move from slow-burning arrangements of classic pop tracks to sleepy originals that highlight the enticing contrast between Wareham's bored baritone and Phillips's elfin whisper.

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

Seventh Ave., at 33rd St. (800-745-3000)—June 11: The musical optimists Fleetwood Mac.

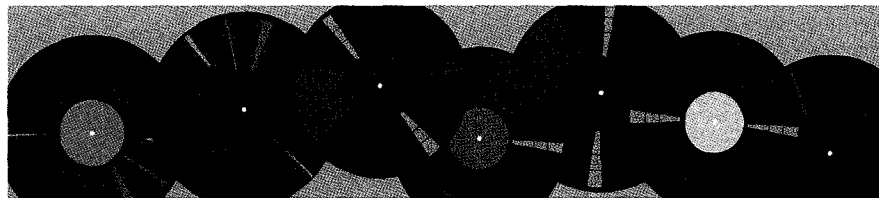
THE MARKET HOTEL

1142 Myrtle Ave., at Broadway, Brooklyn (No phone)—June 5: Thundering out of the basements

Harvey Theatre on June 13. The festival also includes theatre works (see "Dastangoi" and "Richard III: An Arab Tragedy," in the Theatre section) and film screenings, among other events. For a complete schedule, visit muslimvoicesfestival.org. June 5-14.)

S.O.B.'S

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—June 10: Gil Scott-Heron. The righteous voice of indignation behind such socially aware anthems as "The Bottle" and "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" delivers his signature blend of unflinching lyrical content and jazzy, soulful vocals. June 13: Major Lazer.



POP NOTES NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

It's been thirty years since Neil Young first sang "Hey hey, my my / Rock and roll can never die," and he's certainly done his part to preserve the form, remaining a vital and even controversial artist well into his sixties. But he's also become a trailblazer in the art of the curated career retrospective. In 1977, Young released the triple-album compilation "Decade," and, within a few years, he began to discuss the possibility of a sequel, a massive release that would recapture every detail from every phase of his long career. The project has been whispered about for at least twenty years, and in the last two years several release dates have been set and then reset. Now it's finally here, and to say that it's mammoth is something of an understatement, like saying "Live Rust" is loud.

"Archives Vol. 1 (1963-1972)" (Reprise) comes in three formats: an eight-CD version, which goes for around a hundred dollars; a ten-DVD set, for around two hundred; and the ne plus ultra, a ten-disk Blu-ray box, for three hundred. The CD version, an audio-only tour through Young's early albums, outtakes, demos, and live performances, is underwhelming, a 2008 format in a 2009 world. The broader vision becomes clear in the multimedia versions, which supplement each song with photographs, concert footage, radio interviews, and images of everything from tickets to posters to sheet

music. The set tracks Young from his earliest professional efforts—the 1963 surf-rock instrumental single "The Sultan"—to early-seventies landmarks like "After the Gold Rush" and "Harvest." The Blu-ray version has more sophisticated navigation; the DVD set matches the hardware capabilities of more fans. And while the switching of disks can grow tiresome—if you're listening to an early demo of "Sugar Mountain" and want to hear "Tell Me Why," you'll have to eject the first disk and insert the seventh—the wealth of material available is staggering. There are plenty of diverting hidden features, too, like footage of the present-day Young looking through his own memorabilia.

There's a paradox here. Earlier this year, on "Fork in the Road," Young lamented economic pressures, self-centered thinking, and corporate greed; now he's charging through the nose for the most self-aggrandizing product imaginable. But, as music becomes more and more difficult to monetize, the rock-and-roll world must grapple with new profit models. Young's fusion of history and commerce may point the way out of the cul-de-sac. The question is how many artists will amass a body of work that rewards this kind of treatment. Here's one, at least.

—Ben Greenman

of Minneapolis, Gay Beast brings its wide-eyed, brutal sound to Brooklyn. The group's latest record, "Second Wave," is full of erratic shifts in time signature, pleading yelps over razor-sharp eight-bit keyboards, and pounding tribal percussion. Although not for the faint of heart, this frenetic trio's music is miraculously danceable—the perfect soundtrack for a post-apocalyptic discotheque.

"MUSLIM VOICES"

This festival shines the spotlight on more than a hundred artists from India, Indonesia, Iran, Kuwait, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Senegal, Syria, and the U.S. The great Senegalese performer Youssou N'Dour and his band Super Étoile play the Brooklyn Academy of Music on June 5. Sufi musicians from Morocco and France, joined by whirling dervishes, are at BAM's Harvey Theatre the following night. The Iranian singer Parissa presents an evening of Persian classical music (singing Rumi) at the Asia Society on June 11. The Palestinian vocalist Kamilya Jubran performs *maqams* at the Asia Society later that night. A program of gospel and Qawwali music featuring the New Orleans singer Craig Adams and the Pakistani vocalist Faiz Ali Faiz takes place at the

THE STONE

Avenue C at 2nd St. (No phone)—June 14: Erik Friedlander performs a solo cello cycle called "Block Ice and Propane." As a child, Friedlander, the son of the photographer Lee Friedlander, spent his summers driving around the West, and the title refers to the Friedlanders' primitive camper, which relied on block ice for refrigeration and a propane tank for cooking. The compositions, which shift easily between propulsive and haunting, evoke both the freedom of the highway and the feeling that the young Erik had as newer, speedier, air-conditioned R.V.s passed his family by. This performance features an accompanying film by the director Bill Morrison, derived from still images by Lee Friedlander and Maria Friedlander, the cellist's mother.

TERMINAL 5

610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—June 4: The British trio Doves came evanescent out of Manchester (the fabled home of the Smiths, Stone Roses, and Oasis) at the beginning of this decade, practicing an atmospheric blend of dour and dreamy guitar-pop full of obvious nods to their home-town forebears. Their fourth album, "Kingdom of Rust," retains the melancholy of their earlier work, but the sound has

been honed into a more assertive, anthemic model. June 9: Earlier this year, Santi White changed her stage name from Santogold to **Santigold**, following the threat of legal action from a Baltimore jeweller. She returns to New York to perform her compelling and unique mixture of contemporary electro-garage and early-eighties British ska, dub, and New Wave, backed by a full band.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—June 9-20: The pop-inflected singer and saxophonist Curtis Stigers.

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 2-6: The British vocalist Stacey Kent has a striking literary bent; her most recent album, "Breakfast on the Morning Tram," was highlighted by songwriting collaborations with the novelist Kazuo Ishiguro. June 10-13: The violinist Regina Carter's "Reverse Thread" project intertwines classical adaptations and music from Africa.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 1-4: Fourplay is a smooth-jazz band with an impressive pedigree, bringing together the guitarist Larry Carlton, the keyboardist Bob James, the bassist Nathan East, and the drummer Harvey Mason. June 5-7: Gato Barbieri, the passionate Argentinian tenor saxophonist best known for his theme for "Last Tango in Paris." June 9-14: The Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, stocked with veterans of the bop giant's ensembles, works hard to honor its namesake.

CAFÉ CARLYLE

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—June 2-27: The show-biz legend Debbie Reynolds makes her Café Carlyle debut with a monthlong engagement.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA

Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—June 2-7: The saxophonist Wayne Escoffery's ensemble Veneration calls on a host of exceptional players, including the trumpeter Nicholas Payton, the vibist Joe Locke, and the drummer Lewis Nash. June 9-14: Nash takes over with his own well-regarded quintet.

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—June 4-7: The fusion drummer Dave Weckl is joined by the Israeli guitarist Oz Noy and the Letterman-show bassist Will Lee. June 8: The indomitable guitarist and musical innovator Les Paul turns ninety-four. Expect a rousing version of "Happy Birthday" from a legion of fans who have attended his weekly gigs for decades. June 11-14: The Hubtones, an all-star tribute band, pay homage to the iconic trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, who died in December. The celebrants include Bobby Hutcherson, Curtis Fuller, Nicholas Payton, Lenny White, and George Cables.

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—June 4-7: The Brazilian neo-bossa band Trio da Paz includes the acclaimed drummer Duduka da Fonseca and the guitarist Romero Lubambo. June 9-14: The pianist Abdullah Ibrahim is a riveting performer whether playing solo (as he is June 9-11) or as the leader of his horn-laden septet, Ekaya (which is here June 12-14). June 16: The Romanian pianist Marian Petrescu celebrates the music of Oscar Peterson.

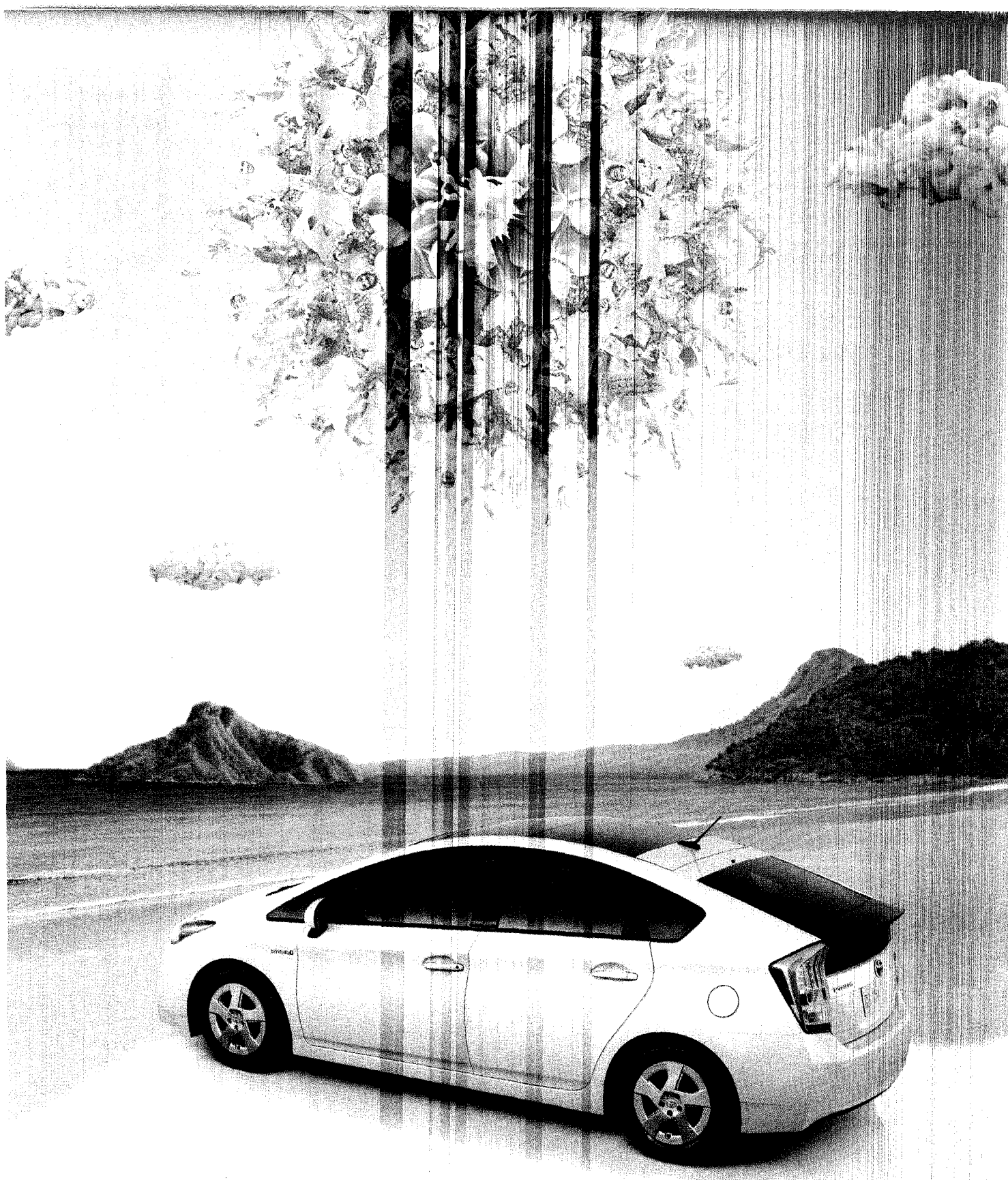
(LE) POISSON ROUGE

158 Bleecker St. (212-796-0741)—June 9: The German chanteuse Ute Lemper celebrates the release of "Between Yesterday and Tomorrow," a sumptuous new record of her own compositions. Lemper, who is rooted in the dark, political cabaret of Brecht and Weill, continues that tradition with songs that touch on the underground atomic-bomb tests in Nevada in the nineteen-fifties and on life in the divided Berlin.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 2-7: The Argentinian composer Guillermo Klein, now based in Barcelona, returns to front Los

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Guachos, his steadfastly in-the-moment big band. June 9-14: A Los Guachos member himself, the saxophonist Bill McHenry is joined in his own quintet by other gifted young players, and by a venerated collaborator, the drummer Paul Motian.

VISION FESTIVAL

Now that the JVC Jazz Festival isn't taking place this year, this downtown gathering is the top jazz event of the summer. (Of course, for those who embrace avant-garde rather than mainstream jazz, that's what it's always been.) This year's edition finds the likes of William Parker, Sunny Murray, Charles Gayle, Peter Brötzmann, and Milford Graves ready to kick up some dust. (June 9-15. For a complete schedule, visit www.visionfestival.org.)

ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—“Francis Bacon: A Centenary Retrospective.” Through Aug. 16. ♦ “Art of the Korean Renaissance, 1400-1600.” Through June 21. ♦ “The Pictures Generation,

1974-1984.” Through Aug. 2. ♦ “Roxy Paine on the Roof: Maelstrom.” Through Oct. 25. ♦ “The Model as Muse: Embodying Fashion.” Through Aug. 9. ♦ “Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages.” Through Aug. 23. ♦ “African and Oceanic Art from the Barbier-Mueller Museum, Geneva: A Legacy of Collecting.” Through Aug. 23. ♦ “Napoleon III and Paris.” Opens June 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—“Into the Sunset: Photography’s Image of the American West.” Through June 8. ♦ “Compass in Hand: Selections from the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection.” Through Jan. 4. ♦ “Tangled Alphabets: León Ferrari and Mira Schendel.” Through June 15. ♦ “Aernout Mik.” Through July 27. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—“Intervals: Julieta Aranda.” The museum inaugurates a new series of projects by emerging artists with four works by the Mexican-born Aranda, installed in a cramped stairwell off the rotunda. The most magical is a camera-obscura peephole offering a view of an hourglass in which the sand trickles up instead of down. A wall clock ticks off a ten-hour day as a nearby radio broadcasts the percussive beat of the artist’s heart. A mural in phosphorescent paint is visible only when the lights go out and cryptic phrases, like “daylight is not kind to ghosts,” are revealed. The just-passing-through mood of the stairwell—and it’s air of dislocation—is a strangely good match for Aranda’s project. Through July 19. ♦ “Frank Lloyd Wright: From Within Outward.” Through Aug. 23. ♦ “Learning by Doing.” Through Aug. 23. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—“Claes Oldenburg: Early Sculpture, Drawings, and Happenings Films.” Through Aug. 30. ♦ “Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen: The Music Room.” Through Aug. 30. ♦ “Sadie Benning: Play Pause.” Benning first gained critical attention in the identity-obsessed, Riot Grrrl days of the early nineties, making confessional videos with a toy camera. (It didn’t hurt that her father, James Benning, was a well-known experimental filmmaker.) Her playful, low-fi roots are still evident in “Play Pause,” a split-screen animation made from drawings that channel both Benning’s inner fifth grader and the British Pop artist Ron Campbell. A loose narrative concerning a day in the life of an anonymous city emerges, in which the viewer is both a flâneur and a voyeur, observing people working, eating, reading, playing soccer, drinking, dancing, watching television, and having sex. A soundtrack combining music and city noise provides an insistently catchy backdrop.

Through Sept. 20. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—“Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam.” Through Sept. 6. ♦ “Sun K. Kwak: Enfolding Two Hundred and Eighty Hours.” Through July 5. ♦ “Gustave Caillebotte: Impressionist Paintings from Paris to the Sea.” Through July 5. ♦ “Reflections in the Electric Mirror: New Feminist Video.” Through Jan. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—“Climate Change: The Threat to Life and a New Energy Future.” Through Aug. 16. ♦ “Extreme Mammals: The Biggest, Smallest, and Most Amazing Mammals of All Time.” Through Jan. 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—“The Treasures of Ulysses Davis.” Through Sept. 6. ♦ “Up Close: Henry Darger.” Through Sept. 6. ♦ “Kaleidoscope Quilts: The Art of Paula Nadelstern.” Through Sept. 13. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM

556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—“Modern Modern.” Through June 13. (Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—“Design for a Living World.” Through Jan. 4. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DRAWING CENTER

35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—“Unica Zürn: Dark Spring.” Through July 23. (Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

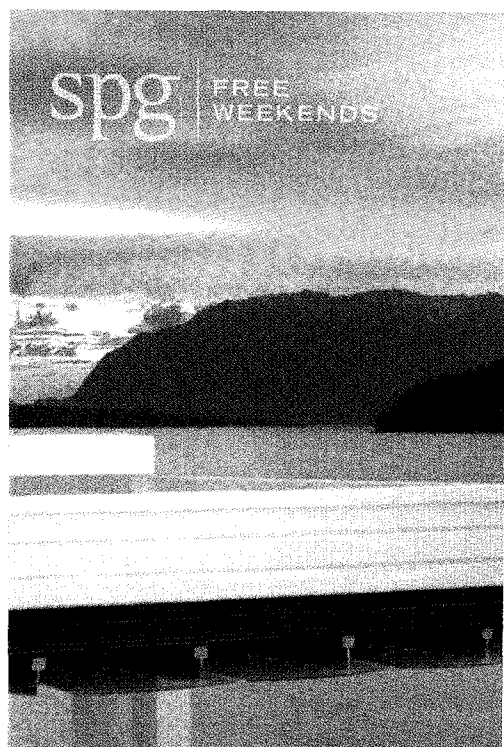
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—“Portraits, Pastels, Prints: Whistler in the Frick Collection.” Through Aug. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—“Avedon Fashion 1944-2000.” Through Sept. 6. ♦ “David Seidner: Paris Fashions, 1945.” Through Sept. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—“Reclaimed: Paintings from the Collection of Jacques Goudstikker.” Through Aug. 2. ♦ “They Called Me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland Before the Holocaust.” Through Oct. 1. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)



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MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—*"New at the Morgan: Acquisitions Since 2004."* Through Oct. 18. ♦ *"Creating the Modern Stage: Designs for Theater and Opera."* Through Aug. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—*"Dutch Seen: New York Rediscovered."* Opens June 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—*"184th Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Art."* Through June 10. (Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—*"Brücke: The Birth of Expressionism in Dresden and Berlin, 1905-1913."* Through June 29. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM

235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—*"The Generational: Younger Than Jesus."* Through July 5. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx (718-817-8700)—*"Georg Ehret: The Greatest Botanical Artist of the 1700s."* Through July 19. ♦ *"The Glory of Dutch Bulbs: A Legacy of 400 Years."* Through June 7. ♦ *"The Heirloom Tomato: An Exhibition of Photographs by Victor Schrager."* Through Sept. 13. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART

Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (718-592-9700)—*"Tarjama / Translation."* Through Sept. 27. ♦ *"Johanna Unzueta: Iron Folklore."* Through Sept. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

SCULPTURECENTER

44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—*"The University of Trash."* Through Aug. 3. ♦ *"Rashid Johnson: Smoke and Mirrors."* Through Aug. 3. (Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—*"Kalup Linzy: If It Don't Fit."* Through June 28. ♦ *"Collected: Propositions on the Permanent Collection."* Through June 28. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

DEBBIE FLEMING CAFFERY

Caffery's black-and-white photographs have always had an otherworldly cast—a sense that she's look-

ing beyond the physical to something more ethereal. *"The Spirit & the Flesh,"* the title of her new book of pictures from Mexico, though applicable to all her work, is especially appropriate for this exhibition of pictures from the book, many of them taken in brothels. Caffery's prostitutes—earthy, voluptuous, naked—are sometimes masked, sometimes in shadow, but, no matter how gloomy the setting, they appear burnished, luminous. There are echoes here of Brassai, Bellocq, and Bravo, but Caffery conjures her own dark mysteries, and the work is as seductive and elusive as her subjects. Through July 31. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

Short List

CAROL BOYE: Horticultural Society of New York, 148 W. 37th St. 212-757-0915. Through Sept. 10.
ALICE NEEL: Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through June 20.
ERNESTO NETO: Park Avenue Armory, Park Ave. at 67th St. 212-616-3930. Through June 14.
SIGMAR POLKE: Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623. Through June 19.
MIMMO ROTELLA: Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through July 31.
ANRI SALA / YANG FUDONG: Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through June 20.
JACK YOUNGERMAN: Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-6780. Through June 26.
"SACRED ARCHITECTURE IN THE AMERICAS": Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059. Through June 20.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

LILI ALMOG

Almog's photographs of Chinese women, many of them members of the Muslim minority living in rural provinces, are at once affectionate and anthropological—occasionally radiant, unfailingly sincere, but rather stiff and a little dry. A series of brief video portraits livens things up, as do unexpected splashes of color: vibrant red, blue, and green fabrics against a bleached-out landscape. And Almog's subjects themselves are ingratiating, if only because they're so rarely photographed. They may not be entirely comfortable in front of the camera, but they face it with a charming lack of guile, an openness that Almog never exploits. Through June 13. (Meislin, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-2552.)

HIROH KIKAI

Fourteen black-and-white photographs taken in one Tokyo neighborhood between 1974 and 2003 provide a core sample of a portrait project that Kikai continues to pursue after some thirty years on the street. His subjects, most of whom stand before a featureless temple wall, are wonderfully random: a young girl in traditional dress, a boy in

a crude homemade wrestler's mask, a maintenance man in a biker's helmet, a bunny in a cape. The gallery has hung a group of August Sander portraits in its project space to draw the obvious parallel (Diane Arbus is another influence), but Kikai's work is quirkier, less formal, and wittily captioned. Don't miss *"A man who said he'd just had a drunken quarrel."* Through July 2. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

FRANK THIEL

Thiel's ongoing photographic excavation of the recent history of Berlin is an archeology of surfaces, down to the cracked paint and peeling plaster of old office buildings in the former East Berlin. Two huge images of these abandoned, dilapidated spaces open the show, which then takes an odd, decidedly decorative turn. All the other photographs here are of patterned curtains that Thiel removed from their original sites, cleaned, pressed, and hung before windows in his studio. Daylight filters through the weave, illuminating vintage designs of stylized flowers, atomic-age geometries, and muted stripes. At more than eight feet high, these pictures are seriously overblown, but they'd be bland and vacuous at any scale. Through June 20. (Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)



Short List

MILES ALDRIDGE: Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978. Through June 20. **LEONARD FREED:** Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930. Through June 13. **CHRIS MARKER:** Peter Blum, 526 W. 29th St. 212-244-6055. Through July 31. **MICHAELA MEISE:** Greene Naftali, 508 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770. Through June 20. **ALICE NEEL:** Zwirner, 533 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through June 20. **PABLO PICASSO:** Gagosian, 522 W. 21st St. 212-741-1717. Through June 6. **CHARLES RAY:** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through June 27. **LARA SCHNITZER:** Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Through June 20. **DIRK SKREBER:** Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through June 27. **BILLY SULLIVAN:** Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-3335. Through June 6. **"SLOUGH":** Nolan, 527 W. 29th St. 212-925-6190. Through June 27.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

KARL HAENDEL

Haendel mixes one part Pop, one part Pictures Generation, and adds a dash of neo-Constructivism (thanks, in part, to Walead Beshty, whose photogram appears in the show). Large-scale graphite drawings are arranged in a staggering floor-to-ceiling installation. Works that are evocative of American Second World War propaganda (a cross between James Rosenquist and Barbara Kruger) suggest straight appropriation, until you read their satirical messages: "Save waste fats for explosives—take them to your meat dealer." Haendel's debt to the media distillations of Jack Goldstein, the graphite stylings of Robert Longo, and the grisaille deconstructions of Troy Brautuch are obvious. But he brings a fresh and funny approach, as evidenced by his show's tongue-in-cheek title, "How to Have a Socially Responsible Orgasm and Other Life Lessons." Through June 20. (Harris Lieberman, 89 Vandam St. 212-206-1290.)

DANIEL ROTH

Building a city claims casualties, chief among them nature. Roth's subject is London, where portions of this show were exhibited in 2006. A small map on one wall notes the locations of the rivers that helped determine the city's layout and which were lost as it expanded. Pipes weave in and out of walls like phantom plumbing. A bunkerlike cube of sod towers over viewers next to a big square of dark water set into the floor, drawing a connection between the containment of culture and the unfathomable mysteries of the wild. Through June 27. (Maccarone, 630 Greenwich St. 212-431-4977.)

BANKS VIOLETTE

Violette's embrace of death-metal culture—a solo show at the Whitney played off the murder of a guitarist for the Norwegian band Mayhem—strives to establish his bad-boy cred. But his work can feel restrained, even innocuous. In his new show, benches made from black equipment cases line the center of the gallery, looking like high-end décor for Goths who have a soft spot for minimalism. They're surrounded by tattoo fodder—a grinning skull, the ace of spades, Bela Lugosi as Christ—photorealistically rendered in graphite. More affecting is a Harley-Davidson cast in salt and resin, lying on its side in the back room. It reads as a memorial to Steven Parrino, Violette's friend and former gallery-mate, who

worked in relative obscurity until he died, in a motorcycle accident, in 2005. Through June 20. (Team, 83 Grand St. 212-279-9219.)

Short List

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI: Freeman, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-5154. Through June 27. **SCOTT GRODESKY:** Sunday L.E.S., 237 Eldridge St. 212-253-0700. Through June 14. **MARILYN MINTER:** Salon 94 Freemans, 1 Freeman Alley. 212-529-7400. Through June 13. **KATRÍN SIGURDARDÓTTIR:** Eleven Rivington, 11 Rivington St. 212-982-1930. Through July 3.



The wide-ranging "Muslim Voices" festival (see Night Life).

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

Balanchine's insouciant and at times silly operatic fantasy "Donizetti Variations" (cue the violent storm music) returns after three years. Later in the week, a Jerome Robbins program includes the minimalist "Glass Pieces," "Other Dances" (a wistful ode to Russia), and the zany "Concert." "Lifecasting," created last season by the young British-born dancer and choreographer Douglas Lee, offers striking images but not much movement; it is paired with Christopher Wheeldon's "Mercurial Manoeuvres" (2000), a maelstrom of movement, with emotional resonance to boot. ♦ June 3 at 7:30: "Concerto Barocco," "Donizetti Variations," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." ♦ June 4 at 8, June 9 at 7:30, and June 13 at 2: "Liebeslieder Walzer" and "Les Noces" (Robbins). ♦ June 5 and June 11 at 8: "Glass Pieces," "The Cage," "Other Dances," and "The Concert." ♦ June 6 at 2: "Swan Lake," "Concerto Barocco," and "Les Noces." ♦ June 6 at 8: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Stabat Mater," and "Glass Pieces." ♦ June 7 at 3: "Concerto Barocco," "Liebeslieder Walzer," and "Glass Pieces." ♦ June 10 at 7:30, June 12 at 8, and June 14 at 3: "Mercurial Manoeuvres," "Lifecasting,"

and "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue." ♦ June 13 at 8: "Mercurial Manoeuvres," "The Cage," "Other Dances," and "The Concert." ♦ June 16 at 7:30: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Through June 21.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

Alexei Ratmansky's new ballet, "On the Dnieper," premieres this week. Each cast offers a different profile, from the deeply tragic quality of Veronika Part to the fluttering emotionality of Diana Vishneva and the luminosity of Hee Seo. (Casts are listed on the company's Web site.) The all-Prokofiev program (June 1-6) is rounded out by Balanchine's revolutionary "Prodigal Son" and "Désir," a ballet by James Kudelka with music from "Cinderella." Then it's on to "Giselle," a ghostly tale of a woman wronged; there are two opportunities to see the retiring Nina Ananiashvili (June 8 and June 12) in the title role, as well as Vishneva's more erotically charged interpretation, on June 9, and, on the evening of June 13, the young Bolshoi phenomenon Natalia Osipova, partnered by Ethan Stiefel. ♦ June 1-2 and June 4 at 7:30, June 3 at 2 and 7:30, June 5 at 8, and June 6 at 2 and 8: "Désir," "On the Dnieper," and "Prodigal Son." ♦ June 8-9 and June 11 at 7:30, June 10 at 2 and 7:30, June 12 at 8, and June 13 at 2 and 8: "Giselle." ♦ June 15 at 7:30: "Airs" and "La Sylphide." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 11.)

TREY MCINTYRE PROJECT

The prolific former dancer and his talented company have their New York debut, with "Leatherwing Bat," "serious," and "Ma Maison," a love poem to New Orleans jazz. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 2-3 at 7:30, June 4-6 at 8, and June 7 at 2 and 7:30.)

CAMILLE A. BROWN & DANCERS

First known for her intensity as a dancer with Ronald K. Brown, the young choreographer has garnered attention as a high-energy dancemaker, with commissions from Urban Bush Women and Alvin Ailey. The Ailey work, the cartoonish "Groove to Nobody's Business," is on the bill here, along with her I-am-woman solo "The Evolution of a Secured Feminine," a new solo about her grandmother, and a new group piece about love. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. June 4-6 at 8 and June 7 at 3.)

YOSHIKO CHUMA

The overarching subject of the veteran conceptual artist's "Page Out of Order" series is the similarities underlying cultural differences. Her latest dance installation is called "Not About Romanian Cinema," and includes excerpts from recent Romanian films. The cast—part Romanian, part Japanese, part American—chats around a long equipment-strewn table and moves in and out of Chuma's trademark aluminum-frame cubes. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. June 4-6 and June 11-13 at 8:30.)

"DARK HORSE/BLACK FOREST"

Yanira Castro starts off the summer site-specific season with a steamy duet performed in the lobby bathroom of the Gershwin Hotel. Seven audience members squeeze in with the dancers; everyone else plays voyeur from a guest room, via closed-circuit TV. Heather Olson and Joseph Poulson couple up for the first two weeks, Luke Miller and Darrin Wright for the second. (7 E. 27th St. 212-352-3101. June 5-7 and June 12-14 at 7. Through June 28.)

ZVIDANCE / "WHITE"

The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council kicks off Site-lines, the free site-specific dance series, with "White," a piece conceived by Zvi Gotheiner. At Fort Jay, on Governors Island, a septet explores the idea of border

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK GIRLISH BEAUTY

The composer, vocalist, dancer, and director Meredith Monk is now an incredible sixty-six years old. To see her perform—as I did this past March, at the Guggenheim, in “Ascension Variations,” a revival of her 1969 theatre



piece “Juice”—is to watch an artist who seems never to have been made moribund by the strictures imposed by adulthood. Monk’s fecund imagination dwells in the garden of girlhood, burrowing beneath what society demands of females beginning in their youth—an almost silent “niceness”—to express her inner life. (Indeed, one of her most moving performances is “The Education of the Girl Child,” from 1973.) On June 3, Monk will perform at the Bang on a Can benefit, at (Le) Poisson Rouge; she’ll also be in concert in Milan. But, if you can’t make either of those shows, have a look at Babeth M. VanLoo’s recent documentary, “Meredith Monk: Inner Voice.” In it, Monk gives full rise to her multigenerational selves, always making performance new.

—Hilton Als

security, set to an original score by Scott Killian. (212-219-9401. June 6-7 and June 13 at 3:30 and 4:30.)

MOLLY DAVIES

“Traditions, Inventions, Exchange,” the experimental filmmaker’s video installation at the Baryshnikov Arts Center (June 4-11), tracks a group of Indonesian, Japanese, and American dancers in their natural habitats over a period of nearly ten years. On June 6 at 3:30, some of the dancers, including Steve Paxton, Kota Yamazaki, Polly Motley, and Sardono Kusumo, gather for a live performance. (450 W. 37th St. 212-279-4200.)

JENNIFER MULLER/THE WORKS

Muller returns to the Joyce for her company’s thirty-fifth anniversary. Apart from the playfully wet “Tub,” made in 1973, the two programs focus on recent works and premieres. The latter includes “Bench,” a representation of how human behavior destroys nature; “Tangle,” a duet that disapproves of power struggles; and “Walk It Off,” which offers tongue-in-cheek advice about stress relief. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 9 at 7, June 10 at 7:30, June 11-12 at 8, June 13 at 2 and 8, and June 14 at 2 and 7:30.)

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE

The golden troupe returns to Brooklyn with two programs. Both, naturally, deliver “Revelations.” The “Best Of” program also includes a new production of Judith Jamison’s “Hymn,” with current company members dancing to the words of those present when the piece was created, in 1993. “Classic Ailey” features the founder’s 1958 “Blues Suite,” enlivened (and nearly overshadowed) by Kenny Brawner and the Brawner Brothers Band. (BAM’s Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. June 9-12 at 7:30, June 13 at 2 and 7:30, and June 14 at 3 and 7:30.)

SARAH MICHELSON

In 2006, while Michelson was nursing various injuries and transferring her downtown aesthetic to a bigger stage at BAM, she told the press that the show would be her last. But she’s back at the Kitchen, with a new work. An intuitive, iconoclastic artist, Michelson tends to keep mum about her dances before they debut. All she’ll say about “Dover Beach” is that it examines, on some level, where it was made: one part in Wales, one in New York. Pete Drungle plays his score live. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. June 9-13 at 8.)

BILL T. JONES/ARNIE ZANE DANCE COMPANY

Capping off an international tour, the company performs “Chapel/Chapter” at the Harlem Stage Gatehouse, where it originated. Three narratives—the murder of a family of four, a man who kills his daughter, and an ambiguous event involving two boys at summer camp—are recited, acted out, sung, and thoroughly distilled. (150 Convent Ave., at 135th St. 212-281-9240. June 11-13 at 7:30 and June 14 at 3.)

REBECCA STENN / BEN MUNISTERI

In a shared evening, aptly titled “Chopped and Screwed,” Stenn (formerly of Momix) and Munisteri will each create ten minutes of dance, while the other will reference directly in a variation, while reconfiguring everything from tempo to sequence to spatial design. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. June 11-14 at 8.)

SARDONO DANCE THEATRE

The renowned Indonesian choreographer Sardono Kusumo brings to the “Muslim Voices” festival his revisionist take on Diponegoro, the nineteenth-century anti-colonial rebel and Muslim mystic. (Asia Society, 725 Park Ave., at 70th St. 212-517-2742. June 13 at 7:30 and June 14 at 3.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

The Philharmonic bids goodbye to Lorin Maazel, its outgoing music director, with a month of important concerts. The first shines the spotlight on the principal clarinetist, Stanley Drucker, also leaving the orchestra, who performs Copland’s Clarinet Concerto in a program that includes Bach’s

Fourth Brandenburg Concerto, Haydn’s Trumpet Concerto (with Philip Smith), and Ravel’s “Boléro.” (June 4 and June 9 at 7:30 and June 6 at 8.) ♦ After this concert of morsels, Maazel turns to a monument of twentieth-century music, Britten’s convulsive “War Requiem.” The vocal soloists are Nancy Gustafson, Vale Rideout, and Ian Greenlaw, backed by the New York Choral Artists, the Dessoff Symphonic Choir, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus; Lionel Bringuier conducts the work’s chamber-orchestra segments. (June 11 at 7:30 and June 12-13 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY

George Rothman’s intrepid orchestra makes a welcome return to its longtime home, Alice Tully Hall, with a concert that features two lyrical masterworks—Schubert’s Symphony No. 2 in B-Flat Major and (with Tim Fain) Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 1—as well as a piece by one of the conductor’s modern favorites, Marius Constant (“Turner,” a tribute to the British painter). (212-721-6500. June 3 at 7:30.)

CENTRAL CITY CHORUS

The fine avocational choir gives audiences a rare chance to hear a major choral work by an always neglected genius, Frederick Delius: his “Requiem,” a decidedly “pagan” work (more Nietzschean than Christian) written during the First World War. With the soprano Elizabeth Farnum and the baritone Jonathan Hays; Stephen Black conducts. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 4 at 8.)

WASHINGTON SQUARE MUSIC FESTIVAL: “STRAVINSKY PLUS”

Washington Square Park has been undergoing reconstruction, but the cellist Lutz Rath’s hardy summer series, more than fifty years old, perseveres, moving its headquarters to St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic Church. In the first of two concerts honoring Stravinsky, the festival fields a wind orchestra for the Russian master’s Piano Concerto (with David Oei) and for the world premiere of David Taylor’s “Too Suite” (with Taylor on trombone); Beethoven’s Trio for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano begins the evening. (371 Sixth Ave. June 5 at 8:30. No tickets required.)

NEW YORK VIRTUOSO SINGERS

Yehudi Wyner, a Pulitzer Prize-winning master craftsman whose music combines exacting precision, complex structure, and lyrical sweep, turns eighty this year. Harold Rosenbaum’s excellent ensemble celebrates by performing several of Wyner’s major choral works, including “Psalm 143” and the “Friday Evening Service.” (Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, 30 W. 68th St. 212-279-4200. June 7 at 2.)

ORCHESTRA OF THE LEAGUE OF COMPOSERS

A bedrock institution in American music, not so visible anymore, gives itself a much needed transfusion by establishing an orchestra of contemporary specialists. Its upcoming concert at Miller Theatre is a prestige affair, featuring works by Julia Wolfe and Elliott Carter (“In the Distances of Sleep,” with the Met mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey), along with world premieres by Charles Wuorinen (“Synaxis”) and Alvin Singleton; John Schaefer hosts. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. www.leagueofcomposers.org. June 10 at 8.)

LITTLE ORCHESTRA SOCIETY:

“VIVALDI’S VENICE”

In the second of two concerts, Dino Anagnost conducts his long-established group in music that the Red Priest of Venice composed for another vital musical city: Dresden. The violinist Maria Bachmann is the orchestra’s guest in three of the composer’s concertos. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. June 16 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE

ACME, as its members (including the violinists Miranda Cuckson and Benjamin Russell) like to call it, has attracted considerable attention by performing, with conviction, music by young composers from across the stylistic spectrum. Its upcoming concert at the Flea Theatre, which kicks off the Tribeca New

RACHEL DOWN

Music Festival, features works by Caleb Burhans, Nico Muhly ("Stride"), Ryan Streber, and Jefferson Friedman. (41 White St. 212-352-3101. June 4 at 7.)

"NEW PATHS IN MUSIC":

"AN HISPANIC FESTIVAL"

This chamber-orchestra series, headed by the conductor David Alan Miller, boldly offers new music by composers rarely heard in the U.S. Six works are on the next program, including "Zephyr," a guitar concerto by Spain's David del Puerto (with Oren Fader), and a work with solo violin by Argentina's Esteban Benzecry (with Rolf Schulte). (Elebash Recital Hall, CUNY Graduate Center, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. 212-868-4444. June 5 at 7:30.)

SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE

June 5-6 at 8: Yo-Yo Ma's multicultural group (which boasts virtuoso musicians from eleven countries) has concertized far and wide, but never at Lincoln Center. They make their debut at Alice Tully Hall in two concerts featuring works from around the world by Giovanni Sollima, Evan Ziporyn, Gabriela Frank, Angel Lam, and Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky. (212-721-6500.) ♦ June 9 at 8: In a free concert at Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park, the Silk Road musicians offer works by Osvaldo Golijov and Kayhan Kalhor and a collection of Asian traditional music. (No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC

June 5 at 8: Near the beginning of a busy fortnight at the floating chamber-music series, the ensemble Trefoil (featuring the countertenor Drew Minter) offers an enticing program of late-medieval music for voices and harps from the Iberian Peninsula. ♦ June 6 at 8 and June 7 at 3: The American String Quartet, an ensemble of elegant probity, performs music from the U.S. by Ruth Crawford Seeger (the magnificent "String Quartet 1931"), Charles Ives, and George Tsontakis (the Quartet No. 4, "Beneath Thy Tenderness of Heart").

(Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For full schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

"DARMSTADT" INSTITUTE

This monthlong festival, named in tribute to (though not connected to) the legendary German "holiday course" for composers, devotes itself to avant-garde works, both recent and established. The first week closes with a two-part concert by Cornelius Dufallo's Ne(x)works ensemble; after a performance of Rzewski's "Les Moutons de Panurge," the group reconvenes to offer music by Anthony Coleman, Kenji Bunch, and the composer-performers Joan La Barbara and Miguel Frasconi. (Issue Project Room, 232 3rd St., Gowanus, Brooklyn. June 7 at 7 and 9. For tickets and full schedule, see www.issueprojectroom.org.)

"THEN & NOW" SERIES

David Del Tredici, the brilliant and flamboyant American master, takes center stage in the new-music series' final concert of the season, accompanying the performance artist John Kelly in his gay-oriented song cycle "Brother." In addition, the pianist Margaret Kampmeier performs Steven Burke's "Night Fantasy." (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 12 at 8.)

ENSEMBLE ACJW

This Carnegie Hall group's name may be clunky, but the young musicians who play in it are anything but, offering consistently polished performances of new and repertory works. Its penultimate concert of the season finds it expanding to (almost) orchestral size, with Jeffrey Milarsky leading a program of works by Takemitsu ("Archipelago S"), Schoenberg, Birtwistle, and Adams ("Grand Pianola Music"). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. June 13 at 7:30.)

"REWIND FASTFORWARD: TEN YEARS OF COUNTER)INDUCTION"

The noted ensemble (featuring such musicians as the violist Jessica Meyer and the clarinetist Benja-

min Fingland), whose repertory embraces music by modernism's younger lights, celebrates its tenth year by offering performances of works by such composers as Lee Hyla ("Ciao Manhattan"), Salvatore Sciarrino, Ryan Streber, and Eric Moe. (Merklin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. June 15 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

GREENWICH MUSIC FESTIVAL:

"DER KAISER VON ATLANTIS"

A green shoot of music culture has sprouted in the hedge-fund capital of the world: a spring festival, dedicated to opera, which this year offers Viktor Ullmann's affecting one-act work—a parable of Nazism, written by its courageous composer in the Theresienstadt concentration camp—in collaboration with the superb young musicians of the International Contemporary Ensemble. Keith Phares, Rachele Durkin, Jeffrey Tucker, and Peter Tantsits lead the cast; Robert Ainsley conducts. (Theatre at St. Catherine's, 4 Riverside Ave., Greenwich, Conn. www.greenwichmusicfestival.org. June 10, June 12, and June 14 at 8.)

**MOVIES
OPENING**

THE ART OF BEING STRAIGHT

Jesse Rosen directed this comedy, about a young man who questions his sexual identity after having a homosexual affair. Opening June 5. (Quad Cinema.)

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AWAY WE GO

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 5. (In limited release.)

DOWNLOADING NANCY

Maria Bello stars in this thriller as a self-destructive woman who falls in love with a killer. Directed by Johan Renck; co-starring Jason Patric. Opening June 5. (Village East Cinemas.)

FOOD, INC.

A documentary, directed by Robert Kenner, about safety issues in the food industry. Opening June 12. (Film Forum.)

THE HANGOVER

In this comedy, three grooms lose the soon-to-be groom during a drunken spree. Directed by Todd Phillips; starring Justin Bartha, Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms, and Zach Galifianakis. Opening June 5. (In wide release.)

HERB & DOROTHY

Megumi Sasaki directed this documentary, about a postal clerk and a librarian who became major art collectors. Opening June 5. (Cinema Village.)

I BRING WHAT I LOVE: YOUSOU N'DOUR

A documentary portrait of the Senegalese singer, directed by Chai Vasarhelyi. Opening June 12. (IFC Center.)

IMAGINE THAT

Eddie Murphy stars in this comedy as a troubled businessman who finds solutions to his problems in his young daughter's fantasies. Directed by Karey Kirkpatrick. Opening June 12. (In wide release.)

KASSIM THE DREAM

A documentary, directed by Kief Davidson, about a former child soldier in Uganda who became a boxing champion. Opening June 5. (IFC Center.)

LAND OF THE LOST

In this science-fiction comedy, Will Ferrell stars as a scientist who is dropped into a time warp and must contend with dinosaurs. Directed by Brad Silberling. Opening June 5. (In wide release.)

MOON

Duncan Jones directed this science-fiction drama, about an astronaut's three-year tour of duty on the moon. Starring Sam Rockwell. Opening June 12. (In limited release.)

MY LIFE IN RUINS

Nia Vardalos stars in this romantic comedy, about a travel guide whose love life is revived during a trip to Greece. Directed by Donald Petrie; co-starring Richard Dreyfuss. Opening June 5. (In wide release.)

SÉRAPHINE

Yolande Moreau stars in this drama, based on the true story of a French cleaning woman who was secretly an artist. Directed by Martin Provost. Opening June 5. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1 2 3

A remake of the 1974 drama, about the hijacking of a New York City subway train. Directed by Tony Scott; starring Denzel Washington, John Travolta, John Turturro, and James Gandolfini. Opening June 12. (In wide release.)

TETRO

Francis Ford Coppola directed this drama, about a young man who travels to Argentina to find his long-lost brother. Starring Vincent Gallo, Alden Ehrenreich, and Klaus Maria Brandauer. Opening June 11. (Sunshine Cinema.)

24 CITY

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 12. (IFC Center.)

UNMISTAKEN CHILD

A documentary, directed by Nati Baratz, about the Dalai Lama's disciple Tenzin Zopa and his quest to find the reincarnation of the Tibetan master Lama Konchog. Opening June 12. (Film Forum.)

NOW PLAYING

ANGELS & DEMONS

More drive from Dan Brown's fictions, adapted by Ron Howard and the screenwriters Akiva Goldsman and David Koepp, and starring Tom Hanks as the Harvard "symbolist" Dr. Robert Langdon. There's the reliable old garbage of secret societies, insignias, codes, tombs, rats, rotting corpses, and uncanny inscriptions. There are fire and torment, unspeakable practices dwelled on at length. And there

are puzzles and potted bits of art history, bristling with unexpected interest. It seems that great paintings and statues play a leading role in ancient webs of conspiracy. Da Vinci knew Vatican secrets; so did Raphael. (Brown doesn't bother with minor artists.) Essentially, it's a treasure hunt, with each work of art containing a clue that leads our hero to rush to the other side of Rome, where he discovers a cardinal who has just been murdered. With Ayelet Zurer as an Italian physicist who accompanies Langdon on the hunt. Shot largely on sets built in Los Angeles.—David Denby (Reviewed in our issue of 5/25/09.) (In wide release.)



Basil Twist curates "A Night with Walt Whitman," at HERE Arts Center.

FASSBINDER'S WOMEN

The German title of this documentary, from 2000—"There Was Nobody for Me but Fassbinder: The Happy Victims of Rainer Werner Fassbinder"—gives some idea of what the participants in the films of the seminal German director (who died in 1982, at the age of thirty-seven) have to say about their relations with him, professional and otherwise. For lovers of Fassbinder's work, this film by Rosa von Praunheim (a founding father of the German gay-rights movement) suggests the cast for an ultimate and unrealized Fassbinder film. Irm Hermann, Hanna Schygulla, Eva Mattes, Harry Baer, Peer Raben, Ingrid Caven, Brigitte Mira, and Jeanne Moreau are among the luminaries who speak about the director's volcanic character, his manipulative, violent, and even sadistic approaches to cast and crew, and the human wreckage he left in his wake. Fassbinder demolished the boundaries between the personal and the artistic, integrating his homosexual relationships and the illusion of conventional heterosexual domesticity with actresses who were his muses and reproducing the resulting conflicts onscreen. The many-faceted portrait that emerges from the recollections of those who, through it all, love and admire him should, at the very least, launch a thousand Netflix orders. In German and English.—Richard Brody (Anthology Film Archives; June 4.)

FIGHTING

As a picture about the sullen art of bare-knuckle boxing—scratch-and-claw combat without rules—it's a fake. The movie's language is chaste, and the fights, staged in back alleys, hidden rooms, and half-finished apartments, may look violent at first glance, but the actual blows and the pain of battle are hidden by tricky editing or just ignored. The hero, Shawn MacArthur (Channing Tatum), after being thrown down on cement and flung against display cases and whatever other furniture happens to be around, shows up the next day with no more than a few decorative

bruises on his face. Still, it's a decent commercial entertainment. The director, Dito Montiel ("A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints"), is from New York, and he has a feel for the hostile atmosphere of the after-hours city—the plug-ugly types lounging outside some crooked convenience store; the furtive activity of fight-scene hustlers, brokers, and middlemen; the fey, knowing sarcasm of the professional gamblers. With Terrence Howard as a saddened, philosophical street operator named Harvey Boarden, a gent who barely survives in the urban muck, and Zulay Henao as the vulnerable young single mother the hero falls for.—D.D. (5/11/09) (In wide release.)

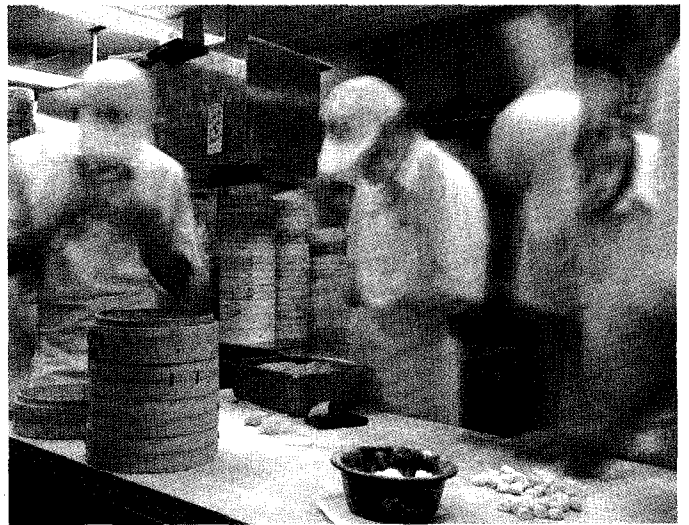
IL DIVO

An elegant reunion for Paolo Sorrentino and Toni Servillo, the director and the star of "The Consequences of Love." In this case, the phlegmatic Servillo plays Giulio Andreotti—seven times Prime Minister of Italy, and an inextinguishable force at the heart of the country's politics. Try to imagine Nosferatu on the threshold of the Vatican and you come close to the bewitching figure that Servillo delivers here; he appears to glide rather than walk, to scorn minor sins in favor of larger conspiracy, and to taste each occurrence (even when it threatens his own position) for its comic savor. By the end, you can't say you know him, but you can't get enough of him, either. The movie that spins around him feels, perhaps unavoidably, less refined; Sorrentino flourishes the secondary characters in style, but he allows the complexities of parliamentary scheming—and of Andreotti's reputed links to the Mafia—to splinter into fast, unmanageable fragments. If we can't hope to be enlightened, he seems to suggest, we might as well be dazed and confused. In Italian.—Anthony Lane (5/4/09) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

JERICHO

A tense, compact new film from Christian Petzold, the director of "Yella." We are in the former East Germany, in sparse flatlands where jobs are hard to come by; some of the characters are tucked away in the woods, as if taking refuge in a fairy tale. Thomas (Benno Fürmann), whose life is as empty as his bank account, takes a job with a rich Turkish immigrant named Ali (Hilmi Sözer)—a beast in some ways, but a sorry figure, too, equally unloved by his wife, Laura (Nina Hoss), and his adopted land. The triangle of desire, resentment, and trust is clearly adapted from "Osessione" and "The Postman Always Rings Twice," but the chill and the formal control of Petzold's version are his alone, as is the emphasis on economic depletion. True love has no chance here, crowded out by the need for money and a place called home; and,

DANIEL KRAL

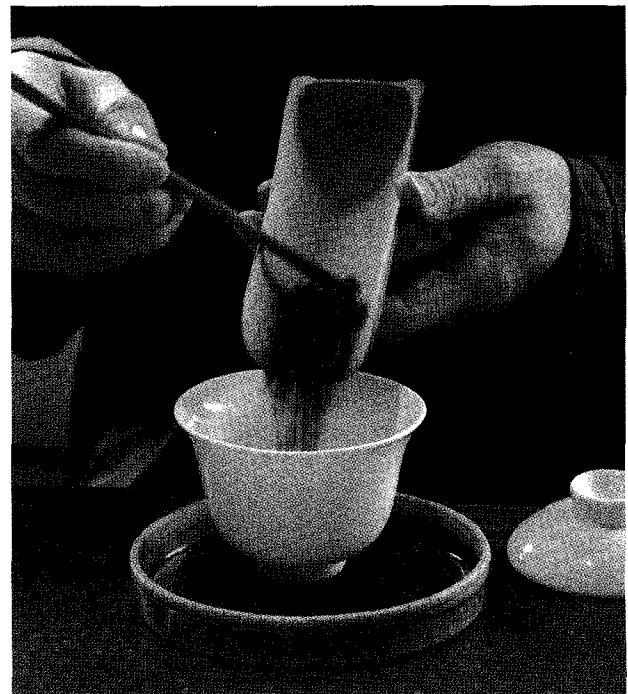


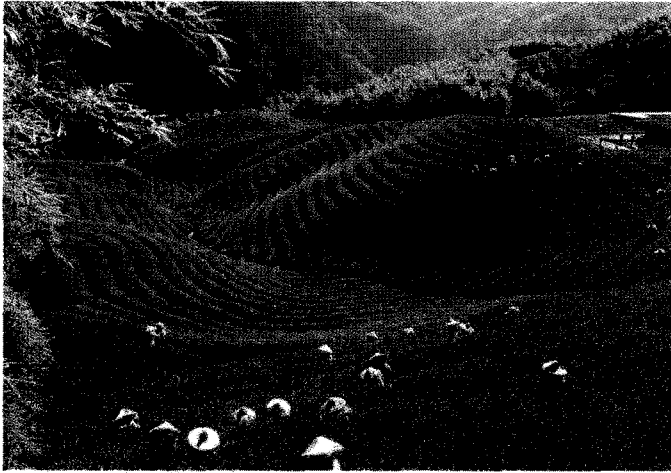
In this the fifth
in our series of six
reports on Taiwan,
travel writer Rudy Maxa
takes on his favorite
subject—food.
And what better
destination to have
visited than one of
the world's capitals
of great cuisine, Taiwan?

A Taste of Taiwan

WE'RE SITTING CROSS-LEGGED on a tatami mat, a low, narrow table of white marble between us. Pink tea flowers float in a hundred-year-old earthen bowl. Dressed in a neatly pressed tunic, Taiwan restaurateur Lin Pin-Hui gently lifts the lid from the ceramic cup of azalea tea. Behind him, sunlight trickles in from a window overlooking lush greenery, though we're just a ten-minute drive from the 24/7 capital city of nearly three million people.

"We can absorb a culture very easily and make it part of our own," says Lin in a soft voice. "Taiwanese culture is a mix of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism." Referring to the tea ceremony unfolding before me, he adds, "We copy this from the Ming Dynasty. Elegant life, I think, is revived in Taiwan."





Lin once operated a teahouse frequented by writers and artists in downtown Taipei. Three years ago he leased several green acres intending to start an artists' colony. But friends kept stopping by for snacks, and today his **Shi-Yang Culture Restaurant** serves about two hundred meals daily to visitors in buildings appointed with calligraphy-decorated walls and delicate teapots arranged on shelves. The nearly Zen experience of dining is heightened when you learn that the staff begins the day by studying Buddhist texts together.

Shi-Yang is a perfect place to start one's education in Taiwanese food, which locals insist is the best Chinese cuisine in the world. The thirty-five-dollar prix-fixe lunch changes every day. And while my ten courses were simple in their ingredients (eggplant with young ginger, among them), they were so artfully arranged I couldn't resist photographing them.

Food is such an integral part of daily life in Taiwan that it seems there's a restaurant, food stall, or teahouse at every turn. The country's largest food festival, the **Taiwan Culinary Exhibition**, held every August in Taipei, is a sprawling exhibition of Taiwanese and Chinese cuisine that attracts chefs from both countries. (Last year, a thirty-dish feast from the Ming Imperial Court was featured.) There's **The Taste of Taiwan Festival** all this month, where the country's two most popular snacks—steamed and fried dumplings—reign supreme. September is the month for the **Penghu Seafood Carnival**, held on the main island in an archipelago in the Taiwan Strait, which separates Taiwan and mainland China.

Taiwan produces what is often considered the best oolong tea in the world thanks to its mature tea culture and ideal growing conditions. Aficionados can visit tea plantations in the southeastern section of Taipei, where **Maokong** is home to numerous teahouses on terraced hillsides. There, in a perfect climate, the country's most popular Dong Ding Oolong can be sampled. In addition, there is also the fruity Dong Fang Mei Ren (which takes part of its flavor from insects that live on the leaves), the lightly fermented Baozhong, or the most expensive local tea (about two hundred dollars for twenty ounces), Li Shan Oolong, which grows in central Taiwan's

Taichung County, the world's highest-elevation tea plantation.

I took tea at the rustic and historic **Wistaria Tea House** in downtown Taipei, where at least fifteen varieties are served along with light snacks in a warren of rooms. Despite its location on a bustling street, once inside, only the rustle of courtyard wisteria and bamboo and a low hum of conversation over bubbling teapots can be heard.

For the national dish of steamed buns, head to **Din Tai Fung** on Xinyi Road in Taipei, where diners can watch chefs carefully fold bite-sized parcels of pork, crab roe, shrimp, chives, or mushrooms that are served with vinegar and ginger-infused dipping sauce. For more than a century, **Tu Hsiao Yueh** in Taipei and Tainan City has served elaborate bowls of *danzih* noodles with minced meat, sprouts, dried shrimp, cilantro, pureed garlic, and black vinegar. The fragrance alone will beckon your taste buds.

Head to the top of the world's tallest completed skyscraper, Taipei 101, for more upscale dining, and book a table (a few weeks ahead, if possible) at the elegant **Shin Yeh 101**, where Chinese fusion cuisine is served along with the country's most incredible urban view. Across the street is the Grand Hyatt Taipei where seafood offerings at the **Pearl Liang Seafood Restaurant** match the sophistication of the setting.

Visitors can prowl the night markets in Taiwan's larger cities; they give the perfect opportunity to rub shoulders with residents and to sample street food. In Taipei, the **Shilin Night Market** is the largest, with nearly four hundred vendors selling all manner of consumer goods, alongside oyster-omelet and taro-cake stands. I ate grilled meats at the **Linjiang Street Night Market**. You'll find salty rice pudding and seafood at the **Huaxi Night Market**, which is also known as Snake Alley for restaurants that serve, well, snake. Stir-fried rice with lamb is a specialty at Tsai, a **Jingmei Night Market** food stall that is quieter than some of its larger competitors and, unlike them, offers local dishes.

Desserts of shaved ice topped with piles of fruit ranging from strawberries to mangos can be found at street stalls. And don't miss what in Taiwan is called pearl-milk tea. Most Americans know it as bubble tea, a cold black or green tea spiked with honey, milk, and gelatinous tapioca balls. The Taiwanese invention is for sale both on the streets and in cafés frequented by students.

In Taiwan, the challenge isn't finding something delicious to eat—it's narrowing the possibilities.

Rudy Maxa is the host and executive producer of the public television series "Rudy Maxa's World."

For more information on Taiwan, visit **WWW.GO2TAIWAN.NET**



COVER IMAGES: FROM TOP LEFT: BUBBLE TEA © LIAO YU-SHENG; DIN TAI FUNG KITCHEN © MARC GERTSCH; NIGHT MARKET © RUDY MAXA; TEA CREAMANT DETAIL © RUDY MAXA; THIS PAGE: TEA PLANTATION © NAR-CHUNG LAI/ANAN TOURISM

as shown by the cruel climax, even when you get what you wish for it may come at an unmanageable price. In German.—A.L. (6/1/09) (In limited release.)

THE LIMITS OF CONTROL

The end credits of the new Jim Jarmusch film read like paintings in a catalogue—"Nude," "Blonde," "Lone Man," and so on—an appropriate echo, since the movie itself is sprinkled with works of art, most of them studied on the walls of Spanish galleries by the loner at its center. As played by Isach De Bankolé, he has no name but, by way of compensation, does have a fine selection of suits, in which he travels to Madrid, Seville, and elsewhere, hooking up with mysterious contacts, exchanging codes and diamonds, and gradually inching toward his ultimate (and surprisingly violent) task. The cityscapes, in particular, are shot with acuity and wit by the cinematographer Christopher Doyle, who pushes them to the brink of abstraction, and the supporting cast, which includes Gael García Bernal, Bill Murray, and Tilda Swinton, could hardly be hipper, or more tuned in to the styles of movies past. The only question is: when a film about a cool fellow, on a cool mission, looks this cool, what is to prevent it from freezing into a series of attitudes? Jarmusch lacks for nothing in his deadpan pastiche of spy thrillers, but some viewers may experience a residual, vulgar longing for the real thing. And you can't blame them.—A.L. (5/4/09) (In limited release.)

MANAGEMENT

After small, precise turns in two other films this year ("The Great Buck Howard," "Sunshine Cleaning"), the great Steve Zahn gets a co-starring role, with Jennifer Aniston, in this slacker-like romantic comedy by the playwright Stephen Belber. Aniston plays Sue, a buttoned-down travelling saleswoman (she deals in decorative art), whose obsessions over charitable causes help spare her any emotional involvement. Zahn is Mike, a sweet, prospectless manager who works at his parents' modest Arizona motel. When Sue checks into the motel, it's love at first sight for Mike, and he begins pursuing her on a cross-country trip to win her love. The film is indifferently shot and at times has the feel of a theatre production, but there's nice supporting work from Woody Harrelson (as Sue's punk ex-boyfriend) and Margo Martindale (playing Mike's mom) to liven things up. There's also an affecting low-key tempo to Belber's dialogue that allows Aniston to bring some honest, focussed attention to her role. But, above all, it's Zahn's puppy-dog charm that keeps the film scampering about amiably.—Bruce Diones (In wide release.)

THE MERRY FROLICS OF SATAN

In this short comic take on the Faust story, from 1906, Georges Méliès, the founding master of trick cinematography, explores the diabolical element of his own genius in dramatizing the transformation of his medium from miracle to vice. The tale concerns an industrious engineer who is lured to an alchemist's workshop, where, bedazzled by the magical doings, he buys a set of wish-fulfilling powder balls—but the price exacted by the wizard (who turns out to be the Devil) is the scientist's soul. Méliès creates onscreen the marvels that the engineer's bargain unleashes (including a train that is launched into outer space), as well as the macabre tricks that the Devil plays on him (such as making all food and drink vanish from his touch). The director's blend of vaudeville stagecraft (sets that hide trapdoors and portholes through which acrobats leap), ingenious editing, and visual metaphor make for a startling and exuberant spectacle. But the mercurial wit and naive charm of the director's inventions can't conceal the latent menace of their power, of which Méliès warns: once you've seen the heavens, the world is not enough. Silent.—R.B. (Anthology Film Archives; June 13.)

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: BATTLE OF THE SMITHSONIAN

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

SIN NOMBRE

This modest epic of immigration is heightened by the brilliant filmmaking of the director Cary Joji Fukunaga (it's his first feature film). The drama—featuring interwoven stories about Honduran teenagers trying to emigrate to the U.S. by any means necessary (and ultimately facing off with Mexican gangs who rob and kill illegal immigrants on their way

north)—is so vividly constructed that it achieves an almost thriller-like urgency. The young, unknown actors in the cast (including Paulina Gaitan and Edgar Flores) are a gifted wild bunch, and the performances are rooted in a naturalistic display of emotions that never feels forced. The film is sometimes dark and brutal, but it has a measure of grace and classical composition (the wide-screen images are remarkable) that carries the story along to a moving conclusion. In Spanish.—B.D. (In limited release.)

THE SOLOIST

A star reporter for the Los Angeles Times, Steve Lopez (Robert Downey, Jr.), befriends a classically trained musician, Nathaniel Ayers (Jamie Foxx), who suffers from schizophrenia and lives on the Los Angeles streets. Downey approaches him with a mixture of professional curiosity and practiced caution. In return, Foxx doesn't look at him much. Turning away, he talks rapidly and lightly, praising Beethoven, always Beethoven, complete with opus numbers. He's not dangerous, but he's not sane, either, and the filmmakers—the screenwriter Susannah Grant (adapting Lopez's book) and the director Joe Wright—don't pretend that friendship can cure madness or that great music can heal wounds that have been open for years. Wright flies over L.A.'s tangled freeways like the angels hovering over Berlin in "Wings of Desire," and he turns Nathaniel's attendance at rehearsals of the Los Angeles Philharmonic into a bliss-out. But then he comes back to earth. Outside a shelter, the director assembles what seems like every lost and wrecked person in the city and halts the story to let them tell their tales. They make their own kind of music. Most of the rest is from Beethoven's Third and Ninth Symphonies. It's hard to see how music and a sympathetic reporter can redeem a messy American city, but this movie makes a plausible case for so fervent a dream.—D.D. (4/27/09) (In wide release.)

STAR TREK

A new beginning, of sorts, for a franchise whose vision of the future seemed lost in the past. The director, J. J. Abrams, warps back to the early days not only of Kirk (Chris Pine) and Mr. Spock (Zachary Quinto) but of the U.S.S. Enterprise herself. Kirk overcomes his rebellious streak—signalled very clearly, for the hard of understanding—to take command of the ship as she flames into combat against the spidery craft of Captain Nero (Eric Bana), who has already jump-started the movie by wiping out Kirk's dad. There is no shortage of time-leaps here, including a jumbled subplot about what might have happened, which involves a longish cameo from a cadaverous Leonard Nimoy. (It's unclear whether non-devout viewers will relish his presence, given that Quinto does such a serene and thoughtful job.) The action scarcely halts for breath, let alone for common sense, and the scene of a ship-to-planet free fall already ranks among the treasures of the headlong; what the movie gains in ardor and cockiness, however, it loses in charm, and the result is much easier to gawk at than to love. With Bruce Greenwood, the nimble-witted Simon Pegg (in the role of Scotty), and a graying Winona Ryder as Spock's mother—how old does that make you feel?—A.L. (5/18/09) (In wide release.)

SUMMER HOURS

A woman in her seventies (Edith Scob), the niece and possibly the lover of a deceased French painter, dies in her home outside Paris, and her three adult children, who grew up there, have to decide what to do with the house, the Art Nouveau furniture, and the paintings by Corot and other artists which they have always lived with. Two of the children, riding the surf of global capitalism, have made lives elsewhere. Watching Olivier Assayas's new film, we realize pretty quickly that the house is France itself—cultivated, beautiful, but powerless in the global era. But what will happen if the house is sold, the collection given to the Musée d'Orsay, the memories dissipated? Is it a tragedy? In the end, Assayas, shooting the film with relaxed, flowing camera movements, gives his love not to objects but to the disorderly life out of which art is made. With Charles Berling, Jérémie Renier, and Juliette Binoche, as the three children. In French.—D.D. (5/25/09) (In limited release.)

TERMINATOR SALVATION

The title is unfortunate, giving the impression—which is more than borne out by the film—that something must be done to save the franchise. The rescue at-

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK RUSSIAN SOUL

Russian ballet dancers often get slotted into types as soon as they go professional. You don't need big jumps to dance the lead in "Swan Lake," but if you're not a jumper you'll have a hard time as Kitri,



the hot-blooded señorita in "Don Quixote." The dancers may tire of such narrow destinies. Natalia Osipova, twenty-three years old—she still has fat cheeks—joined the Bolshoi at the age of seventeen and was immediately tagged as a spitfire. If you look her up on YouTube, you'll see why. She's cheerful, fast, and strong—a classic can-do—and she has a miraculous jump. But, as she told *Ballet* magazine last year, she soon got bored with that side of her armory. "I danced Kitri, Kitri, Kitri all the time. I could dance this ballet now if you were to wake me in the middle of the night. I wanted to do something diametrically different. . . . I desperately want to suffer on stage." This month, with American Ballet Theatre, Osipova will appear, for the first time, in a full-length ballet in New York, and she will suffer—as Giselle, on June 13, and as La Sylphide, on June 17.

—Joan Acocella

TABLES FOR TWO GOTTINO AND WILFIE & NELL



52 Greenwich Ave. (212-633-2590); 228 W. 4th St. (212-242-2990)—The other evening at Gottino, Jody Williams's West Village enoteca, as patrons stacked up in the cramped space between the barstools and the wall, the manager got to work: "We'll have seating in the garden in about an hour," he explained. "There's a table inside about to open up, or seats at the bar could open anytime. Can I get you a glass of wine?" The waiters moved briskly behind the marble-topped bar, neatly attired in white shirts, aprons, and plaid bow ties. At one end of the room, the charcuterie mistress tended her meat slicer; at the other, a stuffed boar's head grinned from the wall. Gottino makes the most of its narrow space; the high pressed-tin ceiling gives the place an airiness, while the yellow tiles and pale wood behind the bar give it a lightness. You get the feeling that the patrons really care about wine, so it was hard not to feel a bit silly ordering the prosecco with strawberries and basil, which, though fresh and filled with delightfully chunky bits of berry, was undeniably pink. And it certainly wasn't meant to go with the food, which is anything but a lark. Wild-boar pâté, for instance, was textured and complex, both spicy and sweet; crostini with "pearls of prosciutto," Parmesan, and a grape *mosto* had a smoky elegance. Even vegetables took a twist: beets, bathed in crème fraîche, arrived in the crisp parchment packet in which they were roasted, along with hazelnuts. Downstairs, on the way to

the rest room, a pantry is set as a cornucopia: a platter piled high with artichokes, overflowing baskets of walnuts, metal buckets of onions and potatoes, and a basin of corks, topped by a watermelon.

At Wilfie & Nell, a gastropub a few blocks south, the room is a chaotic mixture of J. Crew and American Apparel, management consultants standing at the bar, the actress Martha Plimpton at a table near the door. Those wanting a seat need a keen eye and ruthless elbows: it's first come, first served, and there's no list. Here the ceiling is low, and the room has the dark, claustrophobic dampness of an English pub. The waitress, dressed in clingy black, with an eggbeater tattoo on her wrist, wends her way through the crowd with a sweet nonchalance. The food is meant to sop up the beer: pigs in a blanket, though the blanket is bacon; a buttery grilled cheese, made with tangy Gruyère and caramelized onions; neat little pork sliders, with the perfect ratio of meat to bun. Still, it dawns on you that, although the menu was assembled by Joaquin Baca, who also helped mastermind the Momofuku empire, the food is beside the point. One patron summed it up: "The service is terrible, but the waitress is super hot." (Gottino is open weekdays for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and weekends for brunch and dinner; dishes \$5-\$14. Wilfie & Nell is open daily for dinner; dishes \$5-\$12.)

—Andrea Thompson

tempt is hindered, not helped, by the efforts of the director, McG, and his writers, John D. Brancato and Michael Ferris, all of whom, together with the star, Christian Bale, assume that the project is one of the utmost solemnity; anything approaching a laugh, or even fun, is gunned down without remorse. Bale plays John Connor, the leader of the human resistance against the wicked techno-reign of Skynet. Other fighters include Connor's father (Anton Yelchin), a resurrected killer from the past (Sam Worthington), and a child sidekick (Jadagrace) who is cute, mute, and of no use whatsoever to the plot. Bryce Dallas Howard plays Connor's pregnant squeeze, thus adding to the list of roles that waste her bewitching skills. As with the previous film in the series, the one engaging scene is a chase involving high speeds and heavy machinery; the rest of the tale is a slog, and even the Terminators look as if they could do with a fresh set of batteries and an oil check. With a brief cameo by a C.G.I. version of Arnold Schwarzenegger; or maybe *this is* him, and the virtual one is governing California.—A.L. (6/1/09) (In wide release.)

24 CITY

Upon hearing that a vast industrial complex in Chengdu was being torn down to make way for a high-rise compound of apartments and office buildings, the Chinese director Jia Zhangke recognized the event's element of high drama. Blending fiction and documentary, interviewing several retired workers and scripting faux interviews with other characters, he brings huge stretches of long-repressed history to life on an intimate scale. Earlier generations' unfathomable hardships emerge (as when an elderly woman recounts losing her child in a crowd and being forced aboard a work transport by "comrades") as veiled accusations of the system that is responsible for them. The pleasure of retirees singing kitschy Communist songs contrasts painfully with the benumbed uniformity that afflicts them still. Yet the workers' descendants, young individualists who rejected factory labor in favor of becoming a real-estate developer, a TV commentator, or a personal shopper, come off as no

more fulfilled, in an age in which the tight margins of Chinese freedom are reserved for profit. Jia, filming with a calm, probing ruefulness, quietly unlocks the floodgates of memory as a crucial first step toward personal and political liberation. With Joan Chen, as a factory worker who is said by her colleagues to resemble the actress Joan Chen. In Mandarin.—R.B. (IFC Center.)

TYSON

After seeing this fascinating James Toback documentary about Mike Tyson, one can never again think of the fighter as a simpleminded thug. He's a very complex-minded thug indeed, full of contradictions, which he articulates with considerable detail and feeling. The man we see is sad and vulnerable and ferocious all at once—frightened as a virtually parentless boy in Brooklyn who was robbed by neighborhood kids, then remorseless as a baby gangster robbing drug dealers. In detention in upstate New York, he was steered into boxing and wound up in the hands of the great trainer Cus D'Amato, who took him in, fathered him, and got him to concentrate his strength and rage into a relentless attack in which speed—a hail of punches—drives through his opponents' defenses. The rest is bravado, boasting, good and bad times with many women and hangers-on, enormous earnings (most of them blown), and wrenching self-criticism and self-abnegation. Toback doesn't press Tyson on the rape conviction that sent him to prison for three years. (Tyson claims he is innocent.) He lets Tyson speak at great length, and we are free to judge the self-mythologizing, which, however overblown, cannot blur the genuinely tragic story of an ignorant street kid's precipitous rise and disastrous fall.—D.D. (5/11/09) (In limited release.)

UP

Reviewed this week in *The Current Cinema*. (In wide release.)

WOODSTOCK

Michael Wadleigh's documentary of the epochal 1969 rock extravaganza captures groovy musical

highs and rain-soaked chaos. While counterculture anthems waft through the soundtrack, the film builds on pictures of hippies on horseback and workers preparing Max Yasgur's farm for a crowd that grew to roughly half a million. By the time Richie Havens starts the program, the movie audience is primed to be uplifted. Wadleigh and his fellow-cinematographers frame telling images of legendary performances, including The Who in a paroxysm from "Tommy" and Joe Cocker neurotically playing air guitar as he wails "With a Little Help from My Friends." The split-screen imagery augments the you-are-there trip. Martin Scorsese and Thelma Schoonmaker assisted Wadleigh and also edited (along with Jere Huggins and others). The nearly four-hour director's cut includes new footage of Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. Released in 1970.—Michael Sragow (Film Society of Lincoln Center; June 3.)

X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

This noisy, undistinguished prequel to the "X-Men" series is mainly a fight film. The two warring mutant brothers, Liev Schreiber, a morose sadist with fangs, and Hugh Jackman, unhappy but ripped, fly at each other again and again, grappling, punching, slashing. Much of the combat is just a whirl of movement photographed up close. As the "X-Men" series has progressed, the startling and delicate poetic extravaganzas of the first film have given way to flesh-pounding brutishness; the men might be two angry Humvees at war. The story, devised by David Benioff and Skip Woods, is largely meaningless, and the emotions in the movie are no more than functional—they set up the next fight. With Danny Huston as the devious Colonel Stryker, who, claiming he can make Wolverine indestructible, dips him in a glass laboratory bathtub and injects a substance called adamantium into his veins. Naked, a buff Frankenstein's monster, Wolverine escapes, and Stryker tries to hunt him down. Various other mutants make brief appearances, to little effect. Directed by Gavin Hood.—D.D. (5/11/09) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

DRAG ME TO HELL: In wide release. **MONSTERS VS. ALIENS:** In wide release. **PONTYPOOL:** In limited release. **STATE OF PLAY:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—In premiere. June 3-4 at 7 and 9: "Munyrangabo" (2007, Lee Isaac Chung; in Kinyarwanda). ♦ June 5 and June 8-11 at 7 and 9 and June 6-7 at 5, 7, and 9: "The Moon and the Sledgehammer" (1971, Philip Trevelyan). ♦ The films of Rosa von Praunheim. June 4 at 7:30: "It's Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, but the Situation in Which He Lives" (1970; in German). ♦ June 4 at 9:15: "Fassbinder's Women" (†) and "Can I Be Your Bratwurst, Please?" (1999). ♦ June 5 at 7:30: "Army of Lovers or Revolt of the Perverts" (1978). ♦ June 5 at 9:30: "Survival in New York" (1989; in English and German). ♦ June 6 at 3:30: "I Am My Own Woman" (1992; in German). ♦ June 6 at 5:30: "Transsexual Menace" (1996; in German). ♦ June 6 at 7:30: Von Praunheim presents a selection of clips from his films. ♦ June 6 at 9:30: "Tally Brown, New York" (1978). ♦ June 7 at 5:30: "Silence = Death" (1990) and "Germans Taste the Best" (2007). ♦ June 7 at 7:30: "Two Mothers" (2007; in German and Russian). ♦ June 7 at 9:30: "Men, Heroes & Gay Nazis" (2005; in German). ♦ "Essential Cinema." June 11-12 at 7 and 9:15: "The Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ June 13 at 5:30: Short films by Georges Méliès, including "The Merry Frolics of Satan" (†). ♦ June 13 at 7: Short films by Méliès, including "A Diabolical Tenant" (1909; silent). ♦ June 14 at 5:30: Short films by Méliès, including "Tunnel Under the Channel" (1907; silent). ♦ June 14 at 7: "There Was a Father" (1942, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese).

ELIZA HONEY

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—The films of Youssef Chahine. June 3 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Adieu Bonaparte" (1985; in French and Arabic). ♦ June 4 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Return of the Prodigal Son" (1975; in Arabic). ♦ June 5 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Egyptian Story" (1982; in Arabic). ♦ June 6 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Sparrow" (1972; in Arabic). ♦ June 7 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Alexandria, Again and Forever" (1989; in Arabic). ♦ "Muslim Voices." June 8 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Making Of" (2006, Nouri Bouzid; in Arabic). ♦ June 9 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Love for Share" (2006, Nia Dinata; in Bahasa Indonesian). ♦ June 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Grand Voyage" (2004, Ismaël Ferroukhi; in French and Arabic). ♦ June 11 at 7: "Land for a Stranger" (1998, Samir Zikra; in Arabic). ♦ June 12 at 2 and 6:50: "Tavka—A Man's Fear of God" (2006, Ozer Kiziltan; in Turkish). ♦ June 12 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Setin Rouge" (2002, Raja Amari; in Arabic and French). ♦ June 13 at 3 and 9: "Heart of Jenin" (2008, Leon Geller and Marcus Vetter; in Arabic, Hebrew, and English). ♦ June 13 at 6: "Leila" (1996, Dariush Mehrjui; in Farsi). ♦ June 14 at 2 and 8: "Destiny" (1997, Chahine; in French and Arabic). ♦ June 14 at 5: "The Frontier Gandhi: Badsha Khan, a Torch for Peace" (2008, T. C. McLuhan; in English, Urdu, Dari, Pashto, and Hindi), followed by a Q. & A. with the director.

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. June 3-7 and June 9-11 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10 and June 8 at 1, 2:50, and 4:40: "Rashomon" (1950, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ June 12-18 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "Le Combat dans l'île" (1962, Alain Cavalier; in French). ♦ The films of Tod Browning. June 8 at 6:30 and 9:30: "Dracula" (1931). ♦ June 8 at 8: "The Black Bird" (1926; silent).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—Special screening. June 3 at 7: "Woodstock" (†). ♦ "Open Roads," new Italian films. All films are in Italian. June 4 at 7, June 5 at 4, and June 6 at 1: "Brave Men" (2008, Edoardo Winspeare). ♦ June 5 at 2 and June 7 at 9: "I Am Alive" (2008, Dino and Filippo Gentili). ♦ June 5 at 6:30 and June 8 at 2: "The Sicilian Girl" (2008, Marco Amenta). ♦ June 5 at 9 and June 9 at 3:15: "As God Commands" (2008, Gabriele Salvatores). ♦ June 6 at 3:15: Short films by Ursula Ferrara, including "Past Future" (1988). ♦ June 7 at 1:30 and June 9 at 9: "We Can Do That" (2008, Giulio Manfredonia). ♦ June 7 at 4 and June 8 at 4:15: "The Past Is a Foreign Land" (2008, Daniele Vicari). ♦ June 7 at 6:45 and June 10 at 6:15: "Effedia: On My Awful Way" (2008, Teresa Marchesi). ♦ June 8 at 6:40 and June 11 at 2: "A Perfect Day" (2008, Ferzan Özpetek). ♦ June 8 at 8:50 and June 10 at 2:15: "The Germans' Factory" (2008, Mimmo Calopresti). ♦ Human Rights Watch 20th International Film Festival. June 12 at 7 and June 13 at 1:30: "The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court" (2009, Pamela Yates, Peter Kinoy, and Paco de Onis; in English, Acholi, French, Spanish, and Swahili), introduced by the filmmakers and special guests. ♦ June 13 at 4 and June 14 at 7: "Snow" (2008, Aida Begić; in Bosnian). ♦ June 13 at 6:30: "Crude" (2009, Joe Berlinger; in English, Spanish, A'ingae, and Secoya), introduced by the director. ♦ June 13 at 9:30 and June 14 at 2: "The Age of Stupid" (2008, Franny Armstrong). ♦ June 14 at 4:30 and June 15 at 9:15: "Kabuli Kid" (2008, Barmak Akram; in Dari). ♦ June 15 at 4: "Iraq in Fragments" (2006, James Longley; in Arabic and Kurdish). ♦ June 15 at 6:30: "In the Holy Fire of Revolution" (2008, Masha Novikova; in Russian). ♦ June 15 at 9:15: "Back Home Tomorrow" (2008, Fabrizio Lazzaretti and Paolo Santolini; in Dari, Nuba, and Arabic). ♦ June 16 at 4: "Ford Transit" (2002, Hany Abu-Assad; in English, Arabic, and Hebrew). ♦ June 16 at 7: A program of three short documentaries by Dick Rogers, including "Moving Pictures: The Art of Jan Lenica" (1975).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of Michel Piccoli. June 9 at 12:30, 4, and

7:30: "La Puritaine" (1986, Jacques Doillon; in French). ♦ June 16 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "May Fools" (1990, Louis Malle; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnight." June 5-6: "The Shining" (1980, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ June 12-13: "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968, Kubrick). ♦ "The Old Wave: Favorites from the French Masters." June 12-14 at 11 A.M.: "Children of Paradise" (1946, Marcel Carné; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"The Old West: Myth, Character, and Reinvention." June 3-5: "Harlow" (1964, Andy Warhol). ♦ June 10-12: "More Milk Yvette" (1966, Warhol). ♦ "The New India." June 5 at 8 and June 6 at 2: "Yes Madam, Sir" (2008, Megan Donema; in Hindi). ♦ June 6 at 5 and June 10 at 4: "The Firm Land" (2008, Chapour Haghighat; in Hindi). ♦ June 6 at 8 and June 8 at 4:30: "Firaq" (2008, Nandita Das; in Farsi, Hindi, and Urdu). ♦ June 7 at 2:30 and June 11 at 7: "Smile Pinki" (2008, Megan Mylan; in Bhojpuri and Hindi). ♦ June 7 at 5:30 and June 12 at 8: "Luck by Chance" (2009, Zoya Akhtar; in Hindi). ♦ June 8 at 8 and June 14 at 2:30: "Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!" (2008, Dibakar Banerjee; in Hindi). ♦ June 10 at 8 and June 11 at 4: "A Wednesday" (2008, Neeraj Pandey; in Hindi). ♦ June 12 at 4:30 and June 14 at 2:30: "Roots" (2008, Father Joseph Pulanthanath; in Kokborok). ♦ June 13 at 1:30 and June 15 at 4:30: "The Voyeurs" (2008, Buddhadeb Dasgupta; in Bengali). ♦ June 13 at 4: "Children of the Pyre" (2008, Rajesh S. Jala; in Tamil). ♦ June 14 at 5:30: "Supermen of Malegaon" (2008, Faiza Ahmad Khan; in Urdu and Hindi). ♦ June 15 at 8: "Quick Gun Murugan" (2008, Shashank Ghosh; in Tamil and English).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." June 5 at 9:30: "Blood of a Poet" (1930, Jean Coc-

teau; in French). ♦ June 12 at 9:30: "Passport to Pimlico" (1949, Henry Cornelius), introduced by the writer Simon Winchester.

READINGS AND TALKS**"WORD FOR WORD"**

Bryant Park's reading series continues on June 3 at 12:30 with the writer Christopher Buckley, who will discuss his memoir, "Losing Mum and Pup," with John Tierney, of the *Times*. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. For more information, call 212-768-4242.)

STRAND BOOK STORE

The illustrators and graphic novelists Adrian Tomine and Seth talk about their work. (Broadway at 12th St. No tickets necessary. June 4 at 7.)

TIMES CENTER

Following a screening of the new documentary "Food, Inc.," Eric Schlosser, the author of "Fast Food Nation," discusses the state of America's gastro-industrial complex with Robert Kenner, the film's director; the chef Alice Waters; Gary Hirshberg, the president of the organic-yogurt producer Stonyfield Farm; and Marcel Van Ooyen, the executive director of the Council on the Environment of New York City (the operators of your local greenmarket). (242 W. 41st St. For more information, call 718-784-4520. June 4 at 7:30.)

WORDTHEATRE READING

The Los Angeles-based nonprofit WordTheatre has brought its reading series east. On June 7 at 3, Sarah Paulson, Ben Foster, Michael T. Weiss, and Rae Dawn Chong read stories by Rick Moody, A. M. Homes, and James Salter. A question-and-answer session with the authors follows the reading. (Soho House New York, 29-35 Ninth Ave. For tickets and more information, call 310-915-5150, or visit www.wordtheatre.com.)



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GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Following the premiere of the short documentary film "A Girl Is a Fellow Here: 100 Women Architects in the Studio of Frank Lloyd Wright," the author Suzannah Lessard (who is the great-granddaughter of Stanford White) moderates a discussion about the place of these women in history, with the writer Carol Gilligan, the architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright, and Beverly Willis, an architect and the director of the film. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. June 10 at 6:30.)

"LOUD FAST JEWS!"

Richard Bienstock, a senior editor at *Guitar World*, brings together the Ramones founder and original drummer Tommy Ramone (born Tamas Erdelyi), the Dictators singer Handsome Dick Manitoba (Richard Blum), the Patti Smith guitarist Lenny Kaye, and the Blondie co-founder and guitarist Chris Stein to reminisce about the glory days of punk rock in New York City and consider the impact of Judaism on their careers. (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 15 W. 16th St. 212-868-4444. June 11 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

HOLE IN THE WALL CAMPS BENEFIT

Robert Redford and Julia Roberts take the stage with Jerry Seinfeld, James Taylor, Harry Connick, Jr., Yo-Yo Ma, Art Garfunkel, and others in an evening of performances to benefit Paul Newman's Hole in the Wall Camps, which serve seriously ill children. (Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center. For more information, call 212-627-0678. June 8 at 7.)

WORLD SCIENCE FESTIVAL

This five-day celebration commences on June 10 at 7, at Alice Tully Hall, with a birthday party for the naturalist E. O. Wilson, who is turning eighty. He'll be joined by Harrison Ford, Alan Alda, Glenn Close, Joshua Bell, James Naughton, Anna Deavere Smith, and others. The festival continues with discussions on human cooperation, climate change, language, music, insects, and a wide variety of subjects, featuring contributions by Bill McKibben, Margaret Livingstone, and many others. (For a complete schedule, visit www.worldsciencefestival.com. Through June 14.)

"LOST CITY"

The novelist Drew Hubner ("American by Blood," "We Pierce"), the keyboardist Jim Coleman (of the late-eighties band Cop Shoot Cop), the artist Ted Barron, and the cellist Kristen McCord present a multimedia program about the late-twentieth-century heyday of downtown New York. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. 212-614-0505. June 14 at 8.)

"BLOOMSDAY ON BROADWAY"

The annual reading from James Joyce's "Ulysses" takes place on June 16, starting at 6. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

The city's auction houses, sprinting toward the finish of a rather bleak season, will cover a lot of ground in the next two weeks. Christie's skims across the centuries, starting with a sale of twentieth-century design (June 2) and then moving backward, to the art of ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt (June 3). On June 4, the house will offer a wide selection of paintings from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries; a broad sale of furniture, ceramics, tapestries, and carpets follows on June 9. But perhaps the most intriguing sale will take place on

June 12—a private collection of "fête books" (illustrated books recording special events) dating from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The collection includes much ballet-related material, in addition to such delightful items as a German manuscript illustrating the colorful Shrove Tuesday parades in Nuremberg, dating from 1449-1539. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Sotheby's offers much of the same, beginning with two days of Old Master paintings, European sculpture, antiquities, and nineteenth-century art (June 4-5). The highlights on June 4 are a religious scene by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, "The Adoration of the Magi," and a monumental granite head of the Egyptian king Nectanebo II from the fourth century B.C., owned by several generations of Earls of Pembroke. A book sale (June 9) includes a Fourth Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays; an auction of twentieth-century design (June 12) features an aluminum bench by Frank Gehry. A wine sale (June 13) rounds out the schedule. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ Doyle parties like it's 1910 at its latest auction of Belle Époque furniture and design (June 3). (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.) ♦ A Helen Frankenthaler etching, "Sunshine After Rain," will be one of the highlights in Swann's auction of American and contemporary art (June 4), followed by one of its periodic sales of maps and atlases (June 11). (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

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ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES

FEST WITHOUT REST

June 17-July 2

BAMcinemaFEST, which celebrates the tenth anniversary of BAMcinématek, treats New York to an ambitious blend of new independent films (including Andrew Bujalski's "Beeswax" and Ry Russo-Young's "You Won't Miss Me") and repertory classics, such as Fritz Lang's "Metropolis" and Luchino Visconti's "The Leopard," as well as outdoor screenings and an all-night movie marathon. (718-636-4100.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC PULITZER, I PRESUME

June 22

Steve Reich, an icon of minimalist composition and a fixture on the downtown scene, has finally won the Pulitzer Prize for music. The piece that earned him the honor, "Double Sextet," will be performed by the estimable new-music group Signal at (Le) Poisson Rouge. (www.lprnyc.com.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND GREEN THUMBS

June 27-Sept. 13

The New York Botanical Garden celebrates homegrown food with

a series of exhibits and events called "The Edible Garden." It includes an herb garden cultivated by Martha Stewart, a local-food festival on the opening weekend, and cooking demonstrations on Thursdays in July and August. (www.nybg.org.)

ART RESTLESS SPIRIT

June 28-Sept. 21

The Belgian painter James Ensor (1860-1949) paved the way for both Surrealism and Expressionism in fantastical scenes that balance grotesquery, humor, and grace. MOMA will present the first U.S. survey of the artist's work

in more than three decades. (212-708-9400.)

THE THEATRE LONE STARS

July 2

Jack Heifner's comedy "Vanities," about three Texas cheerleaders who come of age at the dawn of women's lib, debuted in 1976. The play has been adapted into a musical, with music and lyrics by David Kirshenbaum and a new, sunnier ending by Heifner. Judith Ivey directs, at Second Stage. (212-246-4422.)

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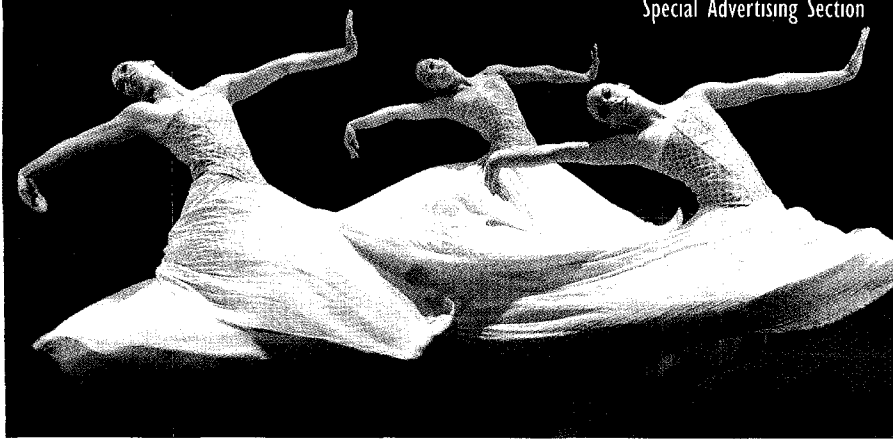
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EXPLORE: IRELAND Festival Season in Full Swing

Each year, Ireland plays host to communal celebrations of the arts great and small. Riding these waves of varied festivities and good feeling may be one of the best ways to experience Ireland, its culture, and its people.

If you find yourself near Dublin in time for the **Kilkenny Arts Festival** (August 7th–16th), you'll discover cutting-edge music, theatre, dance, film, literature, and visual arts set against the backdrop of a historic city that is celebrating its four hundredth anniversary this year.

"We're an 'intimate' festival," says Damian Downes, festival C.E.O., "and our thirteenth-century cathedral and other medieval venues are a great draw for the artists themselves."

Among the classical music highlights at Kilkenny this summer will be Le Concert Spirituel, an early-music ensemble of choristers and musicians from Paris, and the virtuosic Gabrieli Consort & Players from London, performing Claudio Monteverdi's "Vespers," composed four centuries ago.

Kilkenny is one of the stops for the traveling **Blackstairs Opera in the Gardens**, a mini-festival that pitches its tent on the grounds of Kilkenny Castle (July 3rd–5th), and then

moves on to Russborough House and Gardens, in the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains (September 4th–6th).

Blackstairs aims to

introduce opera to a new audience, says Jeremy Hill, the chairman. The program is a double bill of Mozart's comic "Bastien und Bastienne" and a mythological tale, Handel's "Acis and Galatea." During hour-long intervals, patrons can picnic outdoors or dine in the banquet hall, says Hill. "It's a nice social evening with great singing thrown in and the feeling of being part of a place that's normally not available to the public."

The internationally known **Galway Arts Festival** (July 13th–26th) is a delicate balance of more than five hundred Irish and international artists. Among other performances last year, the classic ballet "Giselle" and a concert with the rock star Debbie Harry were two of the more noteworthy.

"We like to think of it not as a festival in a city, but a city in a festival," says the managing director, John Crumlish. Street theatre is a key art form here. "Macnas, which joined U2 on their 1993 Zooropa tour, grew out of this festival," says Crumlish. The group will hold a nighttime parade performance involving a hundred participants for fifty thousand spectators.

The Belfast Festival at Queen's (October 16th–31st) also "takes over the city," says its director, Graeme Farrow. Some thirty venues range from the Ulster Museum (which is re-opening after a three-year renovation) to the campus of Queen's University.

"For nearly half a century, the festival has attracted international performers of the highest order, alongside the cream of the local talent," notes Farrow. "It has been a real cultural beacon. And with Northern Ireland now enjoying a renaissance and Belfast a vibrant cultural capital, the festival continues to be a blue-ribbon arts event."

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT DIVERSE OPINIONS



In making nominations to the Supreme Court, Presidents care about diversity, which is a relatively new term for an idea that is nearly as old as the Court itself. In the early days of the republic, when regional disputes were the foremost conflict of the era, nominees were generally defined by their home turfs. So Presidents came to honor an informal tradition of preserving a New England seat, a Virginia seat, a Pennsylvania seat, and a New York seat on the Court. In the nineteenth century, as a torrent of European immigrants transformed American society, religious differences took on a new significance, and Presidents used Supreme Court appointments to recognize the new arrivals' growing power. In 1836, Andrew Jackson made Roger B. Taney the first occupant of what became known as the Catholic seat on the Court, and that tradition carried forward intermittently for more than a century, with Edward White, Joseph McKenna, Pierce Butler, Frank Murphy, and William J. Brennan, Jr., occupying the chair. In 1916, Woodrow Wilson nominated Louis D. Brandeis, establishing the Jewish seat, which later went, with brief overlapping periods, to Benjamin N. Cardozo, Felix Frankfurter, and Abe Fortas.

With the distance of history, this evolution looks almost inevitable, but the patterns of Supreme Court nominations reflect larger struggles in American life, and many of the confirmation fights were bitter. Moreover, the Justices themselves had little success in addressing the sources of these tensions. (Regional balance on the Supreme Court didn't prevent the Civil War, and religious diversity didn't do much to halt anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic bigotry.) In our own era, when race and gender have defined so much of our politics, it isn't surprising that the appointment of the first African-American, Thurgood Marshall, in 1967, and the first woman, Sandra Day O'Connor, in 1981, became landmarks in the history of both the Court and the country. Nor is it surprising that these appointments—and President Obama's choice of Sonia Sotomayor, who if confirmed will be the first

Hispanic Justice—illuminate our current ideas about diversity.

The use of biographical detail to predict or explain the course of a Supreme Court career is a tool of modest helpfulness. (How much does it matter that John Paul Stevens grew up in Chicago, where his family owned the swanky Hotel Stevens? When Anthony M. Kennedy and David H. Souter were appointed to the Court, both men still lived in the houses they were raised in. So?) Still, one can only admire the way that Sotomayor, who spent her childhood in a housing project in the South Bronx, won scholarships to Princeton and Yale Law School, where she excelled, then distinguished herself as a prosecutor and as a private lawyer. More important, for present purposes, her seventeen years as a federal judge in New York reveal her to be a thoughtful and pragmatic liberal, with an acute sense of the real-world implications of her rulings.

As with earlier breakthrough nominations, Obama's selection of Sotomayor has stirred some old-fashioned ugliness, and in that alone it serves as a reminder of the value of a diverse bench and society. Some anonymous portrayals of the Judge offered the kind of patronizing critiques ("not that smart") that often greet outsiders at white-male preserves. Women who have integrated such bastions will be familiar, too, with the descriptions of her temperament ("domineering"), which are of a variety that tend to reveal more about the insecurity of male holdovers than



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

about the comportment of female pioneers. The pernicious implication of such views is that white males, who constitute a hundred and six of the hundred and ten individuals who have served on the Court, made it on merit, and that Sotomayor is somehow less deserving.

At the Court, as in American life, the rules of diversity have changed. Regional differences faded long ago. The fact that two Arizonans, O'Connor and William H. Rehnquist, served together for almost a quarter century mattered little to anyone. Religious tensions have also cooled. By the time Bill Clinton named Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen G. Breyer to the Court, the fact that both are Jewish (and replaced non-Jewish predecessors) was little more than a curiosity. If Sotomayor is confirmed, there will be six Catholics on the Court, which is also of minor significance. George W. Bush appointed John G. Roberts, Jr., and Samuel A. Alito, Jr., because they are conservative, not because they are Catholic. (The Catholic Brennan was the Court's greatest liberal.) More than anything, it seems clear that the President saw in Sotomayor a kindred spirit—a high achiever from a humble background who reflects, as best as can be determined, his own brand of progressivism.

Still, even Obama, in announcing his choice, shied away from stating the obvious: that Sotomayor was picked in part because she is a Hispanic woman. (The

President called his choice an “important step” but didn’t say why.) There was no need for such reticence. Earlier Presidents didn’t apologize for preserving the geographic balance, and this one need not be reluctant to acknowledge that Hispanics, the nation’s fastest-growing ethnic group, who by 2050 will represent a third of the American people, deserve a place at this most exclusive table for nine. (Nor, of course, did he note that the nomination was in part to satisfy Hispanic voters—the electoral benefit being another constant among Presidents.) As Barack Obama knows better than most, it is a sign of a mature and healthy society when the best of formerly excluded groups have the opportunity to earn their way to the top.

Supreme Court Justices are less bound by precedent than any other kind of judge, so one can never know for sure how even an experienced jurist like Sotomayor will rule once she has that freedom. As a judge on the Second Circuit, she has heard scarcely any cases involving the death penalty, gay rights, or the limits of executive power, which are all mainstays of the Supreme Court docket. Yet, like Obama, Sotomayor has been sympathetic to claims of discrimination by members of racial and religious minorities, and by the disabled. Also like the President, she is a believer in a strong federal government; she rejected claims by an abortion-rights group that the Bush Administration had

violated the First Amendment by withholding aid from foreign groups that promote abortion. When the government pays the piper, she said, in effect, it gets to call the tune. It’s hard to attribute any of her opinions directly to her gender or to her ethnicity, but, as she has observed, her background is inseparable from her views—a circumstance that has applied to every Justice who has ever served on the Court. At this point, one can say only that Sotomayor looks to be what the tableau of President and nominee in the East Room suggested—a fitting representative of a changed and changing nation.

—Jeffrey Toobin

SUBURBAN LEGENDS PANTHER(S)!



The Palisades panther(s) first appeared on the morning of March 6th, in Snedens Landing, a hamlet on the Hudson, just over the New Jersey line. Jane Bernick glanced out her kitchen window and saw, lying in the grass about twenty yards away, a pair of large black mammals. Assuming that they were bears, she retrieved a pair of binoculars. Closer observation revealed that they were feline. Panthers. No question. She spent ten minutes watching them groom each other, before they slinked off. No one believed her.

A week later, Bernick’s next-door neighbor Grace Knowlton, a sculptor, was sitting in her living room, with two guests, when she saw a black panther stalk through a clearing about fifty yards away. She had a sense that it was following another one, but couldn’t be sure. Knowlton called the police, who regarded her report with suspicion, perhaps because she owns a pair of black standard poodles. But she was insistent—the tail, the hind legs, the glistening coat.

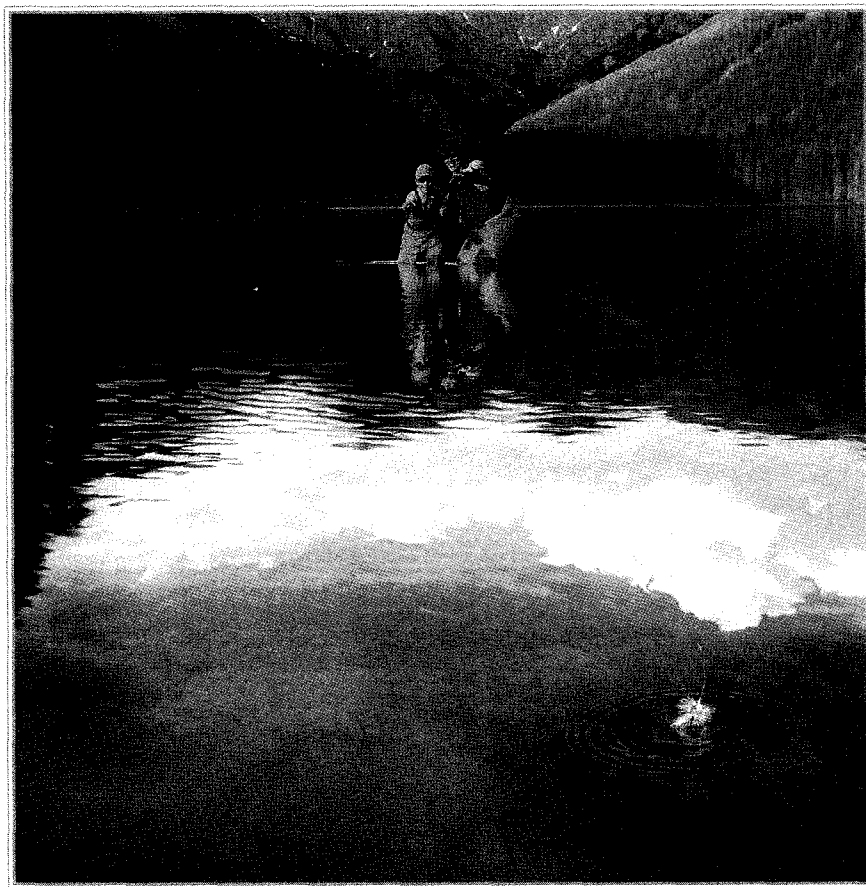
A few days afterward, Dorian Tunell, an electrician, went on a bicycle ride with his eight-year-old son in Tallman Mountain State Park, about a mile north of Knowlton’s place. Not far into the woods, he heard a rustling and looked to see a big black cat jumping over a rock.

“The panther!” the boy cried. He



*“Someday, gentlemen, I promise you—the heady days of
‘Come a ti yi yippy yippy’ will be back.”*

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ditched his bike, and Tunell scooped him up with one arm and rode to a friend's house, warning people along the way to get their pets inside. The friend called the park police, who seemed uninterested until they were told that a neighbor had set off into the woods with a 12-gauge shotgun. (He was wearing loafers.) The police converged, in force, but found nothing.

Still, panther mania took hold. The authorities mounted warning notices and motion-sensitive digital cameras on trees. A town animal-control officer, who goes by Thunder, passed his days parked at Snedens's only stoplight, on the lookout for a panther crossing the road. The neighbor with the loafers changed into full camouflage and roamed the woods with a bayonet. A deli up in Piermont christened a sandwich (chicken cutlet with melted mozzarella) the Panther Special. Residents put out a glossy journal—a "panthology," they called it—of panther poems and limericks, with references to Pablo Neruda, Inspector Clouseau, and Bobby Seale. A contributor named Cantankerous Nick wrote:

An outpouring of amateur verse
Has not solved our community's curse.
This lame verbal scat
About a black cat
Has made the atmosphere worse.

A panther: Was it possible? The term panther can describe any big cat, such as a jaguar or a cougar. Jaguars aren't native to the Northeast; and although cougars may be, it has been many years since they have ventured so close to the George Washington Bridge, and, anyway, they are tawny, not black. Everyone who saw the panther(s)—several more encounters followed—swore that there could be none more black. People were saying that there were a couple of pet black panthers in the county—owners of exotic animals, like sex offenders, have to register with the authorities—but these cats had alibis. So the residents of the Palisades speculated that the panthers had come from Alpine, New Jersey, a few miles south, where one would find mansions and therefore, presumably, citizens more inclined to own and then abandon pet panthers.

Another sighting, in late March, by a woman in her driveway, inspired the villagers to call in a professional tracker. One resident had had as a lab partner in

college the renowned tracking guru Tom Brown, Jr., who had started an organization called Tracker SFI (for "search and forensic investigation"). Tracker SFI applies the ancient Apache art of tracking to police investigations.

SFI deployed a Brown acolyte named Shane Hobel. A week had passed, but Hobel could tell that a big animal had lain down in the gravel in the woman's driveway. He followed a trail into the brush, across a road, and onto a construction site, where Dorian Tunell happened to be working. Hobel showed him where the panther had tracked mud on a log.

That night, Knowlton's poodles burst out of the house barking. They ran through the electric fence and didn't come home. The next day, a friend found them



stranded on a cliff over the Hudson River. That same day, another neighbor, until now a skeptic, saw a panther out by his tire swing. Hobel raced back to Snedens and tracked the cat's trail to a cedar at the edge of a nearby parking lot, where there was a fresh claw mark in the bark. It was five inches wide—a big cat's paw, splayed. Hobel said, "The panther walked up to the base of the tree, paced, sat down, wiggled its butt a bit, arched its back, stretched, reached up, and scratched the trunk of the tree. Then it meandered off to the left." It was his theory that the panthers, solitary by nature, had split up and headed north. A few weeks later, two workers saw a panther pursuing a deer, on a golf course, nine miles north. Tunell had taken to driving around up there at night,

aching, like Richard Dreyfuss in "Close Encounters," for another glimpse.

A first-time tracker, less familiar with the old Apache ways than with "Bringing Up Baby," visited Snedens recently, hoping for signs. Tunell's bike trail began a few feet from the gateway to the home of the actor Bill Murray. The first-timer keened, "I can't give you anything but looove, baby." No panther(s).

The tracker headed south through Snedens, past Orson Welles's old house and a house belonging to Björk, to Knowlton's place, an old farm, strewn with her sculptures. Knowlton has lived there for forty years. She took the first-time tracker along Shane Hobel's route: past a vine-engulfed water tower and a patch of poison ivy, through the woods—Panther Pass, she called it—and into the parking lot, to the tree that the panther had allegedly scratched. There it was, all right: a scratch mark.

Hobel returned to the Palisades on May 18th. He parked his black Jeep in a lot off Route 9W and spread out some cat-track photographs and topographic maps on the hood. He is compact and clean-shaven, a self-abnegated forty-one, and was dressed in camouflage pants and a Tracker SFI fleece and cap. He told the story of Tom Brown, his mentor: at the age of seven, while looking for fossils in southern New Jersey, Brown came across a Native American boy, who introduced him to his grandfather, an elderly Apache scout named Stalking Wolf; over the next nine years, Wolf initiated Brown into the tracking arts. Brown, and later Hobel, learned how to tell, from an imprint in the earth, the height, weight, sex, speed, and mood of the animal or person who had made it. "A track is merely the way Mother Earth feels about you the moment you left the track," he recited. Hobel's mother was a showgirl from Buffalo, his father a Russian concert pianist. For a time, Hobel was a stuntman, working at an Old West theme park upstate. Now, in addition to his work for SFI, he teaches martial arts and wilderness survival.

The construction site where Hobel first saw the cat tracks was just south of the lot. A crew was there grading gravel. "You guys looking for the phantom panthers?" one of the men said. Hobel replied that the panthers were not phantoms. The man said, "People actually saw them? Did they have a couple of cocktails in

'em?" Hobel laughed politely and then dropped into a thicket off the road. With a laser pointer, he indicated the tracks of raccoons, squirrels, and deer in the leaves and mud. Then he crouched down over a bare circle the size of a coaster. "This is easily two months old," he said, tracing claw marks with the laser. "It's the rear right foot of the panther. Here's the heel pad." There was an empty bottle of Michelob next to it. A pack of cyclists whizzed by. Hobel, on hands and knees, sniffed at the trunk of a tree. "I smell for the obvious," he said. Then he lowered his face to the ground: "I will put myself in the vision of a rabbit."

After a while, he crossed 9W and walked up the driveway of the woman who had seen the panther in the gravel. "They're behind us," he said, of the Snedens residents, "in large part because we're really the only ones who believe." Even believing Snedenites seem to recognize, however, that the panthers may fulfill some metaphysical or metaphorical craving, in a neighborhood already expert at sating them. (In the fifties, locals used to spot a raccoon wearing a red bow tie.) As one credulous non-panther-witness wrote in the panthology:

A diversion from financial woes
We've fixated on two feline foes
We're all mad as hatters
But nothing else matters
When the market is at nerve-racking lows.

Hobel dipped into the bushes, crawling into a sort of juniper den. He pointed out a hardened "bile pile": "It was frothing and fresh the day we saw it." There was a scratch on a tree trunk. He poked with a knife at a pile of dried scat and held it up close. "We call this V.S.P.O.P., for 'very strange pile of poo.'" He said that in the woods nearby he'd found a deer carcass and a half-eaten squirrel. "I cut off the squirrel's skin and kept the skull. The panther left me a gift."

Hobel went back across 9W and past the construction site. "Find him?" one of the workers called out.

"We're just cooking him up," Hobel called back.

"Save some for us," the worker said, and they laughed.

Hobel doesn't think it does the art of tracking any good to take cynicism personally. He said quietly, "Go with the joke, keep moving."

—Nick Paumgarten

CLOSINGS NO SCHOOL



The borough of Queens is said to be home to people from more countries than any similarly sized place on earth; so it figures that when the world comes down with a sickness the city is going to feel it first in Queens. In the borough's far reaches, past where the subways stop, many schools were recently closed because of the swine flu. On the locked doors of P.S. 130, at the corner of Forty-second Avenue and Francis Lewis Boulevard, in Bayside, the announcement from the city health commissioner was in English, Spanish, Korean, and Chinese. Children idled in the adjoining playground, where someone had been throwing olive-green water balloons shaped like hand grenades. The sealed-up, fortress-like school buildings in the leafy neighborhoods created a strange atmosphere of false summer on a hot weekday morning in May. All gates but one in the iron-bar fence around Marie Curie Middle School (M.S. 158) were padlocked or chained. Orange signs on the fence outside Adrien Block Intermediate School (I.S. 25) said that it was closed "due to high levels of influenza-like illness." At the shut-tight Our Lady of Lourdes parochial school in Queens Village, no noises could be heard but the chirping of sparrows and the buzz of a distant lawn-care machine.

At Susan B. Anthony Intermediate School (I.S. 238), off Hillside Avenue in Hollis, the flag hung at half-mast for Mitchell Wiener, the school's assistant principal, who went home with swine flu on May 11th and died in a nearby hospital on May 17th. Assistant Principal Wiener was the sixth person in the United States to die of swine flu. He had taught at I.S. 238 for nearly thirty years, and his wife also teaches there. I.S. 238 has more than a thousand students. Almost all of them come from Hollis, one of the neighborhoods that popularized rap music.

A laminated photograph of Mitchell Wiener—a dark-haired, bearded man with half-lidded kindly eyes—had been affixed to the school fence. Candles, flowers, balloons, and stuffed animals

had accumulated into a makeshift shrine on the lawn and steps nearby. People had brought testimonials to Mr. Wiener and taped them to the school's steel doors, or had inscribed their thoughts on the doors themselves in black marking pen. They wrote, "R.I.P. Mr Wiener you did really good things for people," and "Thank you 4 Bringin Me Back to School!!," and "We love yuh even though we ain't had time to say Good bye We love yuh and We'll Never 4 get," and "Rest in Power Mr. Wiener, Love, Daise," and "You would always be remembered for your Jokes and the people you helped," and "Hope U R in heaven," and "Thank you very much for all the things you have done for our school. . . . GOD BLESS YOU ETERNALLY!!," and "You was the Person That woke everybody up in the morning You was a really nice man You and your family was great."

A faint smell of disinfectant came from a custodial room, whose door was open to the street. A school policeman stepped out and looked around. Asked if he had known Assistant Principal Wiener, he replied, "Of course," and looked away. A young woman in khaki-colored jeans and a white blouse walked slowly up the steps and began reading the testimonials. When the wind folded over one of the pieces of paper, she smoothed it back with the side of her hand. Then a young woman in a tight-fitting black top and slacks drove briskly up to the curb and hopped out. "Is this school closed today?" she asked. Told that it was, she pointed to the yellow curb beside her car and continued, "So—it's O.K. for me to park there?"

On the lawn among the stuffed animals and flowers, someone had left a T-shirt with the word "Eagles" on it—the school's team name—and, beside it, a baseball. Mitchell Wiener loved baseball, was a devoted Mets fan, and coached Little League for many years. His eighteen-year-old son, Jordan, goes to Robert F. Kennedy Community High School, where he is a pitcher on the baseball team. On May 21st, the day after his father's memorial service, Jordan pitched a no-hitter in his team's first-round playoff game and struck out fourteen batters in five innings. The feat won notice in the sports section of the *News*. Just guessing, one can imagine how happy this development would have made Mitchell Wiener.

—Ian Frazier

THE FINANCIAL PAGE CHANGE WE CAN'T BELIEVE IN

As you walk into the Retiro train station in downtown Buenos Aires these days, you pass a long line of people snaking their way from the station's entrance to a single window. At first glance, this is unsurprising: what's more common than a queue in a train station? But there is something distinctive about this line: it ends at a window bearing a sign that reads "Coins." The people standing patiently in line are not, it turns out, waiting to buy train tickets. Instead, they're waiting to do something that's become very difficult in Buenos Aires: make change.

The Retiro queue is a sign of the most peculiar economic crisis in recent memory: the great Buenos Aires coin shortage. For well over a year now, small change has been hard to come by there. Stores hang "No Coins" signs in their windows, and offer candies instead of change. Taxi-drivers round up—or down—to avoid giving up precious coins, while smaller merchants sometimes turn away business if you have only bills to offer them. The government has fined banks thousands of pesos for refusing to hand over coins, and, in October, the city's subways became temporarily free when the booths ran short of change. For the average Bonaerense, everyday transactions now entail a complicated calculation of where coins can be acquired and when they will be needed.

That's especially true because most people need change to get around Buenos Aires: the city's buses accept only coins. This has made them an obvious culprit in the shortage, as they take in millions of pesos in coins but, unlike other businesses, don't hand any out. If the bus companies hold onto the coins rather than depositing them in a bank, they can make a significant dent in the amount of change in circulation. And they did have an incentive to do this: before the government cracked down on them, they were reselling coins to businesses at a hefty markup.

But the buses alone can't be responsible for the shortage: they've been coin-operated for many years, while the coin famine is a recent phenomenon. So two

other theories of the origin of the crisis are regularly floated in the city. The first is that the left-wing government of Argentina is conspiring to make the right-wing government of Buenos Aires look bad, before coming to the rescue itself. And, indeed, the national government is supposedly implementing a plan for electronic bus cards, though it's now well behind schedule. The second, and more common, explanation is that people are hoarding coins because inflation is making the metal in them more valuable than their face value.

Hoarding of this sort, and the resulting coin shortages, was once a recurring economic problem, one that the Italian economic historian Carlo Cipolla dubbed



"the big problem of small change." But these shortages were thought to be a feature of premodern times, when coins were made out of precious metal, and people literally brought silver to the mint to have it turned into coins. If the value of silver rose beyond the face value of coins, hoarding silver was a natural response. Today, coins are government-issued tokens, and their value is theoretically unconnected to the metal they contain.

This isn't to say that the material worth of a coin's metal can't still exceed its face value; the rising value of zinc, for instance, meant that, last year, every new penny issued cost the U.S. Mint about 1.7 cents. But hoarding no longer makes sense unless it's done on a large scale, and most people in Buenos Aires are not melting

down their coins into hunks of copper. Yet, even if they're not, the anxiety that others might be hoarding coins and melting them down seems to have been enough to start a panic. Hoarding causes shortages, but shortages also promote more hoarding.

It's no coincidence that this kind of panic has taken hold in Argentina: the country's history of financial crises has made people there profoundly skeptical of the way markets work. The sharp spike in inflation in the past couple of years, for instance, was almost certainly exacerbated by Argentina's previous experience with hyperinflation. Businesses that have gone through an episode of hyperinflation become understandably alert to the threat of it: at the first hint of inflation, they're likely to increase prices, since they've learned that if they don't, and inflation hits, their businesses will be wrecked. In the same way, when it comes to holding onto coins, people hoard first and ask questions later.

You could, then, dismiss the Buenos Aires coin shortage as an anomaly. But the Argentine experience actually underscores the degree to which all modern financial systems depend on confidence, and the problems that erupt when that confidence disappears. In the U.S., after all, the chaos of last year both led to and has been exacerbated by a shortage of its own: credit. As people became worried about the health of the system, they took money out of any investment that smacked of risk and put it into cash (bank deposits have soared in the past six months) or government bonds. That, in turn, made others more anxious: less willing to lend and more interested in holding onto their money. Fear bred a credit crunch, which, in turn, bred more fear. And if fear has left the Argentines with too few coins, it has left us, paradoxically, with too much cash (and too little credit). This isn't to say that financial crises are all in our head; certainly our own was sparked by problems that were very real. But there is an irreducible psychological dimension to both crises and recoveries. And if it's hard for people in Buenos Aires to give up their pennies, think how much harder it will be for Americans to start taking risks again.

—James Surowiecki



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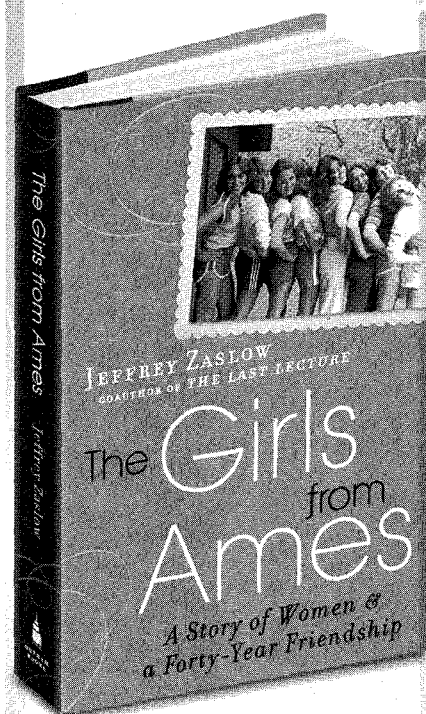
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DÉBUT FICTION

THE TIGER'S WIFE

BY TÉA OBREHT

I. THE TIGER

Having sifted through everything I have heard about the tiger and his wife, I can tell you that this much is fact: in April of 1941, without declaration or warning, the German bombs started falling over the city and did not stop for three days.

The tiger did not know that they were bombs. He did not know anything beyond the hiss and screech of fighter planes passing overhead and the missiles falling, the bears bellowing in another part of the fortress, and the sudden silence of the birds. There was smoke and a terrible warmth, a gray sun rising and falling in what seemed like a matter of minutes, and the tiger, frenzied, dry-tongued, ran back and forth along the span of rusted bars.

He was alone and he was hungry, and that hunger, coupled with the thunderous noise of bombardment, had burned in him a kind of awareness of his own death, an imminent and innate knowledge that he could neither dismiss nor accept. He did not know what to do with it. His water had dried up, and he rolled around in the stone bed of his trough, making that long sad sound that tigers make.

After two days of pacing, his legs gave out and he was reduced to a contraction of limbs, lying in his own waste. He had lost the ability to move, to produce sound, to react in any way. When a stray bomb hit the south wall of the citadel, sending up clouds of smoke and ash and shattering bits of rubble into his skin, his heart should have stopped. The toxic, iridescent air; the feeling of his fur folding back like paper in the heat; and then the long hours during which he crouched at the back of his pen, watching the ruptured flank of the citadel wall: all of these things should have killed him. But something, some sudden flickering of the blood, forced him

to his feet and he made his way through the gap in the wall.

The tiger's route that night took him past the waterfront, where the remains of the merchants' port and the Jewish quarter spread in flattened piles of brick down the bank and into the waters of the Danube. The river was lit by fires, and those who had gone into it were washing back against the bank where the tiger stood. He considered the possibility of swimming across, and under optimal circumstances the tiger might have attempted it, but the smell rising off the bodies turned him around, sent him back past the citadel hill and into the ruined city.

People must have seen him, but in the wake of the bombardment he was anything but a tiger to them: a joke, an insanity, a religious hallucination. He drifted, enormous and silent, down the alleys of Old Town, past the smashed-in doors of coffeehouses and bakeries, past the motorcars flung through shopwindows. He went down the tramway, up and over the fallen trolleys in his path, beneath the lines of electric cable that ran through the city and now hung broken and black as jungle creeper.

By the time he reached Knez Petrova, looters were already swarming the boulevard. Men were walking by him, past him, alongside him, men with fur coats and bags of flour, with sacks of sugar and ceiling fixtures, with faucets, tables, chair legs, upholstery ripped from the walls of ancient Turkish houses that had fallen in the raid. He ignored them all.

Some hours before sunrise, the tiger found himself in the abandoned market at Kalinia. Here the scent of death that clung to the wind separated from the pools of rich stench that ran between the cobbles of the market square. He walked with his head down, savoring the spectrum of unrecognizable aromas—splattered tomatoes and spinach



that stuck to the grooves in the road, broken eggs, bits of fish, the thick smell smeared around the cheese counter. His thirst insane, the tiger lapped up water from the leaky fountain where the flower women filled their buckets, and then put his nose into the face of a sleeping child who had been left, wrapped in blankets, under the pancake stand.

It was dawn by the time the tiger left the city, but he did not go unobserved. He was seen first by the gravedigger, a man who was nearly blind, and who did not trust his eyes to tell him that a tiger,

braced on its hind legs, was rummaging through the churchyard garbage heap, mouthing thistles in the early-morning sunlight.

The tiger was noticed, too, by the city's police chief, who would go on to shoot himself three days later, and who mentioned the tiger in his last letter to his fiancée. "I have never seen so strange a thing as a tiger in a wheat field," he wrote, "even though, today, I pulled a woman's black breasts and stomach out of the pond at the Convent of Sveta Maria." The last city dweller to see the tiger was a farmer who was burying his

son in a garden two miles north of the city, and who threw rocks when the tiger got too close.

The tiger had no destination, only the constant tug of self-preservation in the pit of his stomach, some vague, inborn sense of what he was looking for, which carried him onward. For days, then weeks, there were long, parched fields and stretches of marshland clogged with the dead. Bodies lay in piles by the roadside and hung like pods from the branches of trees. The tiger waited for them to fall, then scavenged them until

LORENZO MATTOTTI

he got mange, lost two teeth, and moved on. He followed the river upstream through the flooded bowl of the foothills, swollen with April rain, sleeping in empty riverboats while the sun, pale in the blue mist of the river, grew dimmer.

By early autumn, he had spent four months in the swamps, gnawing on decaying carcasses that drifted by, stealing the occasional bird's egg, and snatching frogs and salamanders along the creek bed, until one morning, in the grip of an early frost, he came across a boar. Brown and bloated, the hog was distracted with acorns, and for the first time in his life the tiger gave chase. It was loud and poorly calculated. He came on with his head up and his breath blaring like a foghorn, and the boar, without even turning to look at its pursuer, disappeared into the autumn brush.

The tiger did not succeed, but the attempt was something, at least. He had been born in a box of hay in a Gypsy circus, and had spent his life feeding on fat white columns of spine in the citadel cage. For the first time, the impulse that made him flex his claws in sleep, the compulsion that led him to drag his meat to the corner of his solitary cage, was articulated into something other than frustration. Necessity drew him slowly out of his domesticated clumsiness. It strengthened and reinforced the building blocks

of his nature, honed his languid feline reflexes; and the long-lost Siberian instincts pulled him north, into the cold.

II. THE VILLAGE

I'm told that the tiger was first sighted on the Galinica ridge, above my grandfather's village, during a snowstorm at the end of November. Who knows how long he had already been hiding up there, but on that particular day the herdsman Vladiša lost a calf in the blizzard, went up the mountain to retrieve it, and, in a thicket of saplings, came across the tiger, yellow-eyed and bright as a blood moon, with the calf, already dead, hanging in its jaws.

People did not believe poor Vladiša, even when they saw him running down the hill, white as a ghost, arms in the air, with no calf. They did not believe him when he collapsed in the village square, breathless with terror, and managed to stutter out that they were all done for, that the Devil had come to Galina, and call the priest quick. They did not believe him because they didn't know what to believe—what was this orange thing he was screaming about, its back and shoulders scorched with fire? They would have been better equipped to react if Vladiša had told them that he had met the witch Baba Roga and, in that same instant, her skull-and-bones hut on its one giant chicken leg had

come tearing down the hillside after him.

My grandfather and his own grandmother, Mother Vera, were among those who were summoned to the square by Vladiša's shouting. My grandfather was nine, and he ran out of the house in just his shirtsleeves. Mother Vera came out after him with a coat in her hands, cuffing him across the ear and forcing him into it, while the blacksmith and the fishmonger and the man who sold buttons propped Vladiša up in the snow and gave him water.

Vladiša was saying, "The Devil, I tell you! The Devil has come for us all!"

To my grandfather, the Devil was many things. The Devil was the hobgoblin whom you met in the pasture, and who asked you for coins—deny him and he would turn the forest around, and you would be lost forever. The Devil was Night, Baba Roga's third horseman, who rode a black charger through the woods. Sometimes, the Devil was Death, who waited for you at a crossroads or behind some door you had been repeatedly warned against opening. But as my grandfather listened to Vladiša, who was sobbing about orange fur and stripes, it became clearer and clearer to him that this devil on the mountain was something else.

Mother Vera's people had always been shepherds, and when my grandfather fell to her care she was determined to make him continue the legacy. When he turned eight, my grandfather started taking the sheep to pasture in the green, quiet fields above Galina. With sixty sheep to one boy and all the tree shade he could want, my grandfather taught himself to read that first summer. He read the alphabet book, that staple of childhood learning. Then he read "The Jungle Book," a gift from the village doctor. For weeks, my grandfather sat in the long-stemmed grass and pored over the brown volume with its soft pages. He read about the panther Bagheera, Baloo the bear, the old wolf Akela. Inside the cover was a picture of a boy, thin and upright, thrusting a stick of flame into the face of an enormous square-headed cat.

"But that's Shere Khan," he said to the crowd, and everyone who had come running from the village turned to look at him. The doctor, however, was there, too. "You may be right," the doctor said. "Where's that book I gave you?" My grandfather ran inside to get it, and came back out with the book open to the dog-eared



"Great news! Your novel is in a medium-sized pile in the middle of the floor about four feet from the left side of Oprah's assistant's desk."

page with his favorite picture, the one of Mowgli and Shere Khan. He held it out to the terrified cowherd. Vladiša took one look at it and fainted, and that was how the village found out about the tiger.

III. THE MEAT

If the tiger had been a different sort of tiger, a hunter from the beginning, he probably would have come down to the village sooner. His long journey from the city had brought him as far as the ridge, and even he could not be certain why he had chosen to remain here. But the ridge—with its bowed saplings and broken trees underfoot, the steep flank of the mountain studded with caves, the wild game wide-eyed and reckless with the starvation of winter—trapped him between his new, broadening senses and the vaguely familiar smell of the village below.

All day long, he walked up and down the length of the ridge, letting the smells drift up to him, puzzled by the feeling that they weren't entirely new. He had not forgotten his time at the citadel, but his memory was heavily veiled by his final days there and the days afterward, his arduous trek, the burrs and splinters of glass stinging his paws, the dense, watery taste of the bloated dead. By now, he had only an indistinct sense, in another layer of his mind, that long, long ago someone had thrown him fresh meat twice a day and sprayed him with water when the heat grew unbearable. The smells from below meant something related to that, and they made him restless and agitated as he wandered the woods, impulsively sprinting after every rabbit and squirrel he saw. The smells also made him more and more aware of his hunger, of his lack of success as a hunter, of the length of time since his last meal, the calf that had blundered into him that bitter afternoon when he'd seen the man turn and run. The taste of the calf had been familiar; the shape of the man had been familiar.

And, some nights later, there was a new smell. He had sensed it here and there in the past—the momentary aroma of salt and wood smoke, rich with blood. It came up to him almost every night, in darkness, and he stood there in the

freshly fallen snow, with the trees arching in low around him, breathing it in and out.

One night, he went down to the valley and stood at the pasture fence. Across the field, past the barn and the empty pigpen, past the house with its snow-packed porch, stood a smokehouse. There was the smell, almost close enough. He did not return for two days, but when he did he found meat. Someone had



been there in his absence. One of the fence planks had been ripped down, and the meat lay under it, dry and tough but full of the smell that frenzied him. He dug it up and carried it to the woods, where he gnawed on it for a long time. Two nights later, he had to venture closer to find the next piece; it was waiting for him under a broken barrel that had been left out in the field, just yards from the smokehouse door. A cautious return some nights later to the same place, a bigger piece. Then two pieces, then three, and, eventually, a whole shoulder right at the threshold of the smokehouse.

The following night, the tiger came up the smokehouse ramp and put his shoulders in the doorway, which was thrown wide open for the first time. He could hear the sheep bleating in the stable, some distance away, terrified by his presence; the dogs, fenced up, barking furiously. The tiger sniffed the air: there was the smell of the meat but also the thick, overwhelming smell of the person inside, the person whose scent he had found on and around the meat before, and whom he could see now, sitting in the back of the smokehouse, a piece of meat in her hands.

IV. MY GRANDFATHER

For a while there was no trace of the tiger, and the town went nervously about its business. The end of the year was marked by heavy snowstorms, knee-deep drifts that moved like sand in and out of doorways and buried the mountain passes and, along with them, any news of the war. The season provided the townspeople with the best possible excuse for staying indoors, and the tiger, they hoped, would not survive the winter.

They had almost managed to con-

SEDARIS READS
SEDARIS. KING
READS KING.
OBAMA READS
OBAMA. GILBERT
READS GILBERT.
GLADWELL READS
GLADWELL. CLINTON
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vince themselves that it had all been a joke, that Vladiša had seen a personal ghost or perhaps had some kind of seizure up there in the mountains. But the village dogs—sheepdogs, thick-coated herders with yellow eyes—knew for certain that he was up there, could smell the big-cat stink of him, and it drove them crazy. They bayed and pulled at their tethers, filling the night with a hollow sound, and the villagers, swaddled in their nightshirts and woollen socks, shook in their beds and slept fitfully.

But not my grandfather. My grandfather still carried wood from the timber pile, collected eggs, brought water back from the well every evening. Mother Vera's back and stiff joints were his responsibility, and, besides, he was hoping, all the time hoping, for a glimpse of the tiger. So much so, in fact, that he carried his brown volume with the picture of Shere Khan everywhere he went. And while he never went far that particular winter, it must have been tangible, the excitement of a nine-year-old boy, because it brought him to the attention of the girl who lived in the butcher's house.

She was a small-wristed, olive-skinned girl of about sixteen, and my grandfather, not the most observant boy, had seen her occasionally, on market days, but had never noticed her with any particular interest until that winter, when she blocked his path and took the book out of his breast pocket. She smiled at him and opened it to the dog-eared page, running an ungloved finger through the knots of dark Turkish hair that curled around her face. My grandfather had his cap down around his ears, and in the muted hush of his own head he heard himself say, "That's what the tiger looks like."

The girl did not say anything, and it occurred to him that she might be embarrassed because she couldn't read—so he launched into an explanation of Shere Khan and his complicated relationship with Mowgli. He talked quickly, and the girl, who still hadn't uttered a word, continued to smile, and then, after a few minutes, handed the book back to him and went on her way. My grandfather puzzled over this all day, and when he asked Mother Vera about her she cuffed him and said, "Don't bother her, that's Luka's wife. That girl's a deaf-mute, and a Muhammadan besides—you stay away from her."

SURVIVORMAN

Here's a fact: Some people want to live more
Than others do. Some can withstand any horror

While others will easily surrender
To thirst, hunger, and extremes of weather.

In Utah, one man carried another
Man on his back like a conjoined brother

And crossed twenty-five miles of desert
To safety. Can you imagine the hurt?

Do you think you could be that good and strong?
Yes, yes, you think, but you're probably wrong.

—*Sherman Alexie*

Luka, the town butcher, owned the pasture and the smokehouse on the edge of town. He was a tall man with wavy brown hair and thick red hands, and he wore an apron that was perpetually soaked in blood. My grandfather could remember only one encounter with Luka, during a winter storm when Mother Vera had sent him out to buy a leg of lamb. The front room of the shop had been filled with the smell of meat, and my grandfather had stood and looked around at the hams and sausages hanging from the rafters, soup bones and square bacon slabs in the cold counter window, the skinned red lamb with its sharp little teeth lying on the block while Luka cleaved the bone of the leg away. My grandfather was leaning in to look at jars of something brined and white and lumpy behind the counter when Luka nodded to him and said, "Pigs' feet. Delicious. Taste a lot like little boys' feet, actually," which sent my grandfather home crying.

He couldn't remember whether he had seen the girl when he had gone to the butcher's shop; perhaps she hadn't been married to Luka then. And he did not see her again until the day before Christmas Eve, when he went out after dark to fetch water for Mother Vera's bath.

My grandfather wore his wool coat and hat, and carried the empty bucket to the well, which stood at the center of the village. He had just put the bucket down and grabbed the rope when he looked up and saw a thin light at the edge of

the pasture. My grandfather tried to see through the darkness: he could see the butcher's house, with the fire dying inside, which meant Luka was probably fast asleep, but the light was not that. It was the smokehouse: the door was open and there was light inside.

My grandfather did not go there looking for trouble. It merely occurred to him that some travellers or some Gypsies had found shelter for the night and that they shouldn't be there—Luka would be angry, or they might come across the tiger. It was the latter thought that drove him to pick up his bucket and press on to the smokehouse, partly because he wanted to warn the intruder about the tiger, partly because he was filled with a frantic, inexplicable jealousy at the thought of some drifters seeing his tiger first. Carefully, he crossed the empty fold and picked his way through the pasture.

My grandfather crept up the ramp to the smokehouse and stood in the doorway, looking in, and realized there was a lot less light than he had initially supposed. He could hardly see inside, where the hollowed-out hogs and cattle hung in rows, to the little room in the front corner, where the butcher's block stood. The smell was wonderful, and he suddenly felt hungry, but then there was a different smell that he hadn't noticed before, a thick, dark musk, and just as he realized this the light went out. In the sudden darkness, he heard a low, heavy sound, like breath, all around him, a single, deep

rumble that strung his veins together and spread through his skull. He dove into the butchering room and crawled under a tarp, where he sat in a shuddering heap.

Something in the darkness moved, and the butcher's hooks, hanging along the rafters, clinked against one another, and my grandfather knew that it was the tiger. The tiger was walking. He could not make out the individual footfalls, the great velvet paws landing one in front of the other, only the over-all sound of it, a soft, travelling thump. He tried to quiet his own breathing, but found that he couldn't. He was panting under the tarp, and the tarp kept drawing in and rustling around him, pointing him out. Then he could sense the tiger just beside him, its big red heart clenching and unclenching under its ribs, the weight of it groaning through the floor. My grandfather's chest was jolting, and he could already picture the tiger bearing down on him, but he thought of "The Jungle Book"—the way Mowgli had taunted Shere Khan at Council Rock, torch in hand, grabbing the Lame Tiger under the chin to subdue him—and he put his hand out through the tarp and touched the coarse hairs passing by him.

And, just like that, the tiger was gone. My grandfather felt the big, hot, rushing heart brush past and vanish. He broke out in a sweat, sitting there with his bucket between his knees. He heard the sound of footsteps, and moments later the deaf-mute girl was kneeling at his side in the little room, digging him out of his tarp, brushing the hair from his forehead with worry in her eyes. Her hands, sweeping over his face, carried the heavy smell of the tiger, of snow and pine trees and blood.

And then Mother Vera's voice, screaming in the distance: "My child! The Devil has taken my child!"

My grandfather eventually learned that Mother Vera, sensing he had been gone a long time, had stepped out and, from the stairs of their little house, had seen the tiger taking off across the field. She was still screaming when the doors of the houses around the square opened, one by one, and the men spilled out into the streets and gave chase to the edge of the pasture. Loud voices, and then light and men filling the smokehouse doorway, even Luka the butcher, looking furious in his nightshirt and slippers, a cleaver in his

hand. The deaf-mute helped my grandfather to his feet and led him to the door, where he could see the dark field swimming with shadows: the villagers, the snowdrifts, the fence. But not the tiger. The tiger was already gone.

"He's here, here he is," my grandfather heard someone say, and suddenly Mother Vera was clutching at him with her cold hands, out of breath and stuttering.

Outside, in the snow, were footprints. Big, round, springy footprints, the even, loping prints of a cat. My grandfather watched as the grocer Jovo, who had once killed a badger with his bare hands, knelt down in the snow and pressed his hand into one of them. The tracks were the size of dinner plates, and they ran—matter-of-factly and without pause—down from the woods and across the field, into the smokehouse and back.

"I heard something in the smokehouse," my grandfather was telling everyone. "I thought one of the animals had escaped. But it was the tiger."

Nearby, Luka stood looking out through the smokehouse door, holding on to the arm of the deaf-mute, whose skin had gone white around his grip. She was looking at my grandfather and smiling.

He appealed to the deaf-mute. "You came out because you heard him, too, didn't you?"

"The bitch is deaf. She didn't hear anything," Luka answered, before he led her across the field into the house and closed the door.

V. THE BLACKSMITH'S GUN

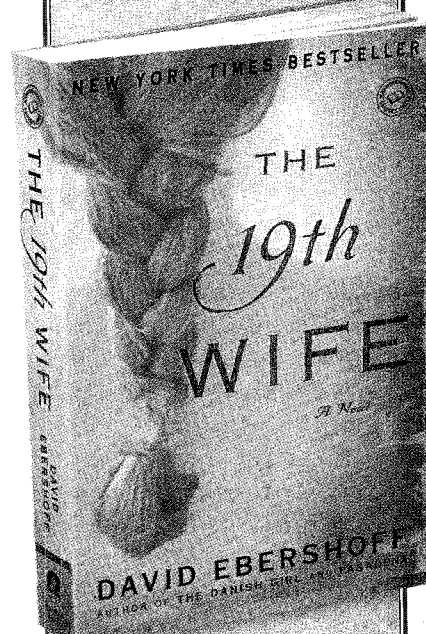
There was only one gun in the village, and for many years it had been kept in the home of the blacksmith. It had been fired only once, in the direction of a sheep rapist, and never by the blacksmith himself. Now, my grandfather learned, the gun would be used to kill the tiger. He watched the men prepare for the hunt the following morning, in the gray hours before dawn. My grandfather did not know what to make of his encounter in the smokehouse, but his throat was tight when the blacksmith emerged from his house with the gun under his arm. With him were two other men: Luka and Jovo. They had dogs with them, too—a short, fat hound with floppy ears and an old red sheepdog with one eye.

It was Christmas Eve, and the entire

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village had turned out to watch the hunters depart. People stood in a long line by the side of the road, their hands held out to touch the gun for luck as it went by on the blacksmith's arm. My grandfather stood guiltily beside Mother Vera with his sleeves drawn down over his hands, and when his turn came he touched the barrel with the tip of one sleeve-covered finger, and only for a moment.

That afternoon, as my grandfather waited for the hunters to return, he drew in the hearth dust with the same finger and hated the men on the hill. He hated Luka already, for the pigs' feet and for the way he called his wife "bitch," but now he hated the other men, and the dogs, too, because he believed, fully and wholeheartedly, that the tiger would have spared him, even if he had come in a moment earlier or later, even if he had come in to find the tiger's eyes burning at him from the other side of the smokehouse. He could already see the men coming back, the tiger slung upside down on a pole between them, or just the tiger's head, in one of their carry-sacks, and he hated them.

He probably would not have hated them had he known what is easy to guess: that the blacksmith was terrified. Climbing up Galinica, knee-deep in snow, the gun a dead weight against

his ribs, the blacksmith was convinced that this was the end for him. Like everyone in the village, he had faith in the rituals of superstition. He gave money to beggars before travelling. He had spat on his children when they were born. But, unlike his fellow-villagers, he was renowned for having a deficit: he had been born in a lean year, and, to make matters worse, an estranged aunt had once lifted him from his crib and praised Heaven for what a gorgeous, fat, rosy baby he was—thereby sealing forever his fate to be generally impoverished, crippled, struck down and taken by the Devil at some unexpected time, in some terrifying way.

Of course, it hadn't happened yet. But he could not imagine anything more terrifying than a tiger. And there he was—thirty-nine years old, happily married, with five children—on his way to meet the Devil. Like his companions, the blacksmith did not know what to expect. He hoped that they would not meet the tiger at all. He hoped to find himself at home that night, eating goat stew and preparing to make love to his wife.

The day was intermittently gray and bright. A freezing rain had fallen during the night, and the trees, twisting under the weight of their ice-laden branches, had transformed the forest into a snarl of crystal. The dogs plodded along, running

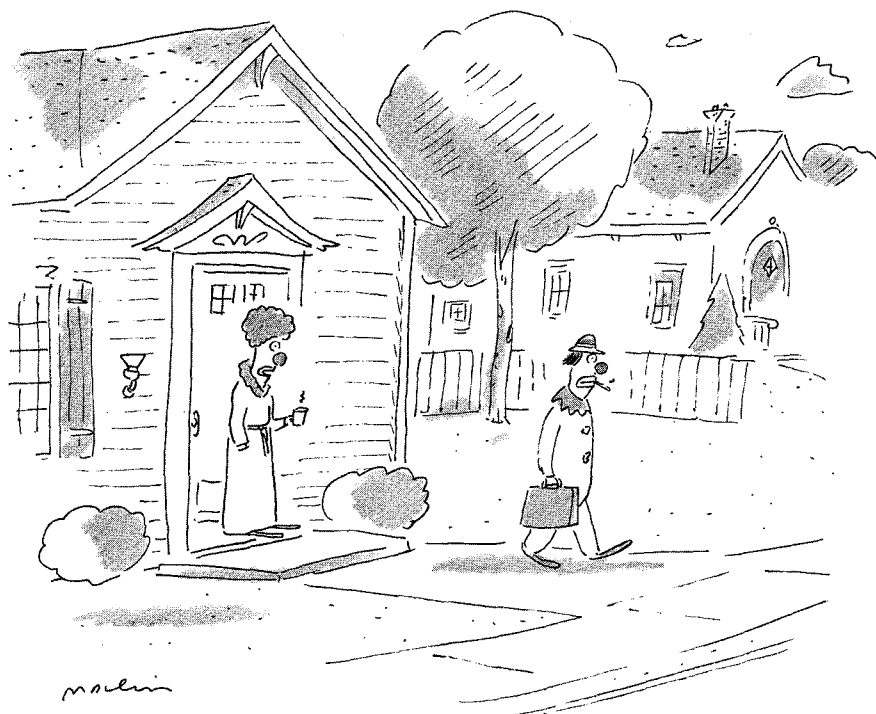
to and fro, sniffing at trees and pissing wherever they could, seemingly unaware of their purpose on this trip. Luka was bracing himself up the mountain, using his pitchfork as a staff, and talking, too loudly for the blacksmith's taste, about his plans to raise the price of meat if the Germans came through in the spring. Jovo was eating cheese, throwing slices of it to the dogs, and calling Luka a filthy collaborator.

It was late afternoon when they came across the tiger in a clearing by a frozen pond, bright and unreal, as if carved from sunlight. The dogs saw him first, sensed him, perhaps, because he lay partially obscured in the shadow of a tree. The blacksmith felt his organs clench as the first of the dogs, the bravely stupid, half-blind shepherd, reached the tiger and immediately went end over end as the big cat lashed at and then pinned him with all its enormous weight.

Jovo seized the other dog and held it in his arms as they watched the tiger crush the thrashing shepherd. There was blood on the snow already, from something that the tiger had been eating, something that looked like a pork shoulder, something that Luka was observing keenly as his grip on the pitchfork tightened.

Later on, in the village, Luka and Jovo would praise the blacksmith for his strength and resolve. They would talk about how bravely he had raised the gun to his shoulder. Over and over, they would tell the villagers about how the blacksmith had fired, how the bullet had struck the tiger between the eyes, sending up a tremendous rusty spurt. The noise that the tiger had made: a sound like a tree breaking. The tiger's invincibility: how they had watched while it got to its feet, despite the bullet lodged in its skull, and cleared the pond in a single bound before bringing the blacksmith down in a cloud of hellish red; a snap like thunder—and then nothing, just the blacksmith's gun lying in the snow and the dead dog across the pond.

In reality, at that moment, the blacksmith stood stone still, staring at the yellow thing in the bracken. Seeing it there, crouched at the pond's edge with the body of the red dog under it, the blacksmith suddenly felt that the whole clearing had gone very bright, that brightness was spreading across the pond and



"Make 'em laugh."

toward him. Luka shouted to the blacksmith to hurry up and shoot, idiot, and Jovo, whose mouth had dropped open, had now taken off his hat and resorted to slapping himself in the face with it, while the remaining dog, shivering like a bulrush in a high wind, cowered under his free arm.

After uttering a little prayer, the blacksmith did actually raise the gun to his shoulder and did cock it, sight, and pull the trigger, and the gun did go off, with a blast that rocked the clearing and spasmed through the blacksmith's knees. But when the smoke had cleared and the noise of it had died down in his ribs the blacksmith looked up to discover that the tiger was on its feet and moving swiftly to the frozen center of the pond, undeterred by the ice and the men and the sound of the gunshot. Out of the corner of his eye, the blacksmith saw Luka drop his pitchfork and break for cover. The blacksmith fell to his knees. His hand was rummaging through the clots of yarn and the buttons and crumbs that lined the bottom of his pocket, searching for the encased bullet. When he found it, he stuffed it into the muzzle with shaking hands that seemed to be darting everywhere with the sheer force of terror, and fumbled for the ramrod. The tiger was almost over the pond, bounding on muscles like springs. He heard Jovo muttering, "Fuck me," helplessly, and the sound of Jovo's footsteps moving away. The blacksmith had the ramrod out and he was shoving it into the muzzle, pumping and pumping and pumping furiously, his hand already on the trigger, and he was ready to fire, strangely calm with the tiger there, almost on him, its whiskers so close and surprisingly bright and rigid. At last, it was done, and he tossed the ramrod aside and peered into the barrel, just to be sure, and blew his own head off with a thunderclap.

No one would ever guess that the gun had misfired. No one would ever guess that Luka and Jovo, from the branches of the tree up which they had scrambled, had watched the tiger reel back in surprise and look around, puzzled. No one would ever guess, not even after the blacksmith's clothed bones were found in disarray, many years later, that the two of them had waited in that tree until the tiger had pulled the blacksmith's legs off and dragged them away,

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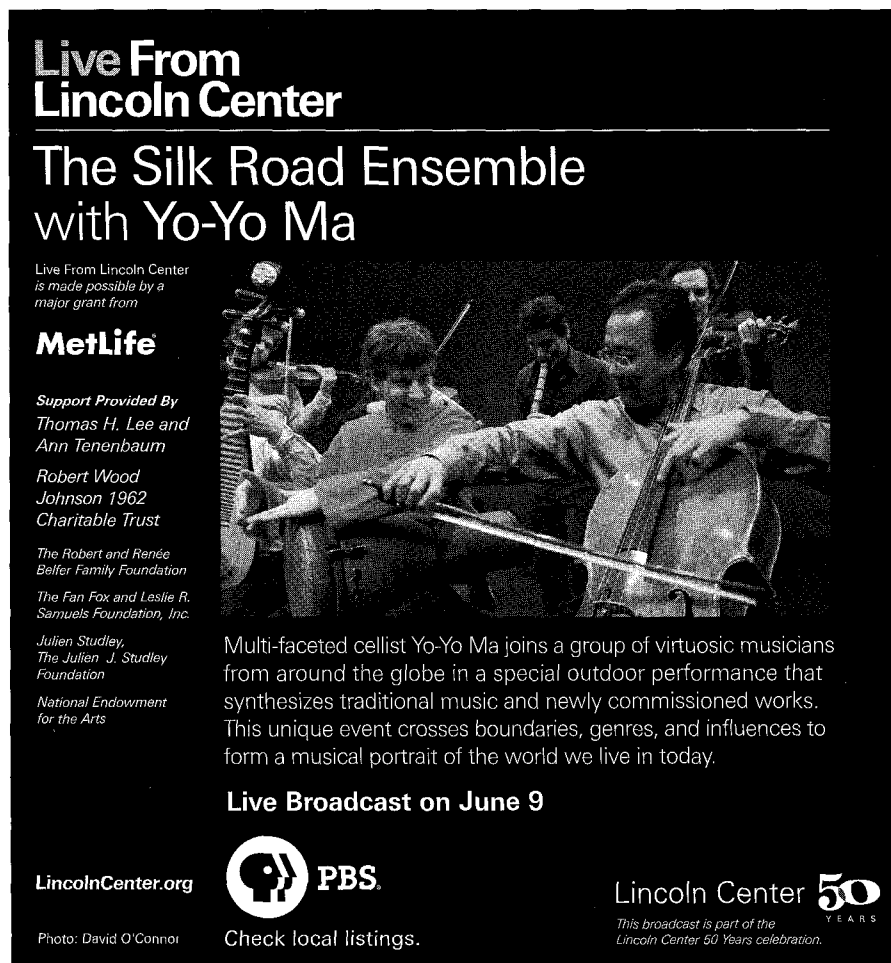
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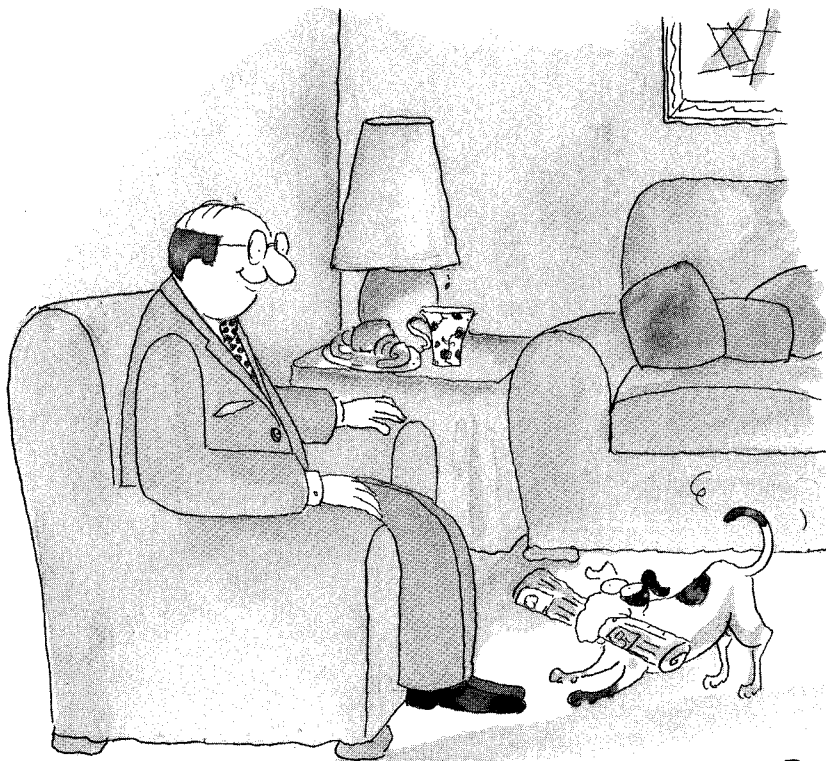
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Victoria Roberts

"Yes, we still love print, don't we?"

had waited until nightfall to climb down and retrieve the gun from what was left of the blacksmith. No one would guess that they had not even buried the unlucky blacksmith, whose brain was eventually picked over by crows, and to whose carcass the tiger would return time and time again, until he had learned something about the taste of man, about the freshness of human meat, which was different now, in snow, than it had been in the heat of summer.

When Luka and Jovo returned from the mountain, carrying with them the gun of the fallen blacksmith—about whose fate they lied through their teeth, and whose final moments they played up to such an extent that stories of the blacksmith's skill and fortitude were being told in surrounding towns long after the war had ended—my grandfather was relieved to discover that the hunt had not been successful. In the long afternoon and night while the hunters were away, he had contemplated his encounter with the tiger in the smokehouse. Why had the girl been there? Had she been there the whole time? What had she been doing?

He knew for certain that her purpose had not been to harm the tiger, that she had smiled knowingly at him when it became obvious that the tiger had escaped. My grandfather considered what he would say to the girl when he saw her next, how he could ask her, knowing she could not reply, about what she had seen, what the tiger was like.

My grandfather felt certain that he would see her at the service to honor the blacksmith. Sunday afternoon, he stood at the back of the church and scanned the frost-reddened faces of the congregation, but he did not see her. He did not see her outside afterward, either, nor later that week at the Wednesday market.

VI. THE BUTCHER

What my grandfather didn't know was that, in addition to the gun, Luka had brought something else back from the mountain: the pork shoulder that the tiger had been eating when the hunters had come upon him in the glade. My grandfather did not know that, after Luka had entered his quiet house at the

edge of the pasture and slowly placed the blacksmith's gun by the door, he had swung that pork shoulder into the face of the deaf-mute girl, already kneeling in the corner with her arms over her belly. My grandfather didn't know that Luka, after he had dislocated the deaf-mute's shoulder, had dragged her into the kitchen by her hair and pressed her hands into the stove.

People now, they give a thousand explanations for Luka's marriage to the girl, who was only thirteen the day they wed. She was the bastard child of a notorious gambler, some say, who was forced on Luka as payment for a tremendous debt, a shameful secret that followed him back from those years he spent as a *guslar* in Turkey, before his father died and he was summoned home to Galina to take over the family trade. According to others, he purchased her from a thief in Istanbul, a man who sold girls at the souk, where she had stood quietly among the spice sacks and pyramids of fruit until Luka found her.

Whatever Luka's reason, there is general agreement that the girl's presence in his life was intended to hide something, because a deaf-mute could not reveal the truth about the assorted vices he was presumed to have, his gambling, his whoring, his predilection for men. He thought he had found someone to put between himself and the village, someone whose appearance, at least, if not her disability, would discourage the townspeople from making contact—because she would remind them too much of the last war, of their fathers' fears, the stories they'd heard of sons lost to the Sultan. Never mind, the villagers thought, that he had found a wife who could never demand anything of him, or reproach him for being drunk, or beg for money.

But, in finding her, Luka had stumbled into an unwelcome complication. He had underestimated the power of her strangeness, the village's potential for a fascination with her, and now people were talking more than ever. The secrecy she had been intended to afford him had turned his life into a public spectacle. The villagers were constantly chattering now, gossiping, speculating, and flat out lying about where she'd come from and how he had found her, asking after the bruises on her arms,



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why they were rarely seen in public together, why she'd yet to bear him a child—every possible answer leading only to further questions, further humiliations. It was worse than the first winter of their marriage, when he had brought her with him to church on Christmas, and the entire congregation had whispered afterward, "What does he mean by bringing her here?" Worse even than the following Christmas, when he had not, and they said, "What does he mean by leaving her at home?"

And now they were talking about the smokehouse. In the two days since the tiger was spotted in the village, there were whispers everywhere. "What had she been doing," they were asking on street corners, "in the smokehouse with that tiger? And what did it mean," they wanted to know, "that Luka couldn't keep her in his bed?"

For weeks, he had suspected that the smokehouse was missing meat, but he had second-guessed his own judgment, refusing to believe that she had the audacity to steal from him. And then he had seen the tiger, and the sight of that pork in the big cat's jaws had stunned him—that little Gypsy, he had thought, that emasculating Muhammadan bitch, sneaking out and giving his meat to the Devil. She was making him look like an idiot.

Hitting her had never helped before, but it made him feel that he was doing something, interrupting her thoughts, at the very least, if he could do nothing to interrupt the town's. In a way, her silence had always terrified him. She was like an animal, he thought, as silent and begrudging as an owl. The injustice of it: that judgment that he knew was there but couldn't make her voice or put away, reinforced now to such an extent that she spent her nights away from him and stole from him, and the whole village had seen it. They were saying what she couldn't—or at least that's what he thought—and so he beat her. With his hands, his feet, his belt, he beat her.

The night he returned from the hunt, he took her outside and tied her up in the smokehouse. He told himself that he wanted only to punish her, but while he was eating his supper and getting ready for bed he understood that some part of him was hoping that the tiger would come for her, that it would

come in the night and rip her apart, and in the morning he would awake to find nothing.

VII. THE WIFE

If you go to Galina now, people will tell you different things about Luka's disappearance, but, of course, no one will ever tell you that days went by before anyone began to suspect a thing. People didn't like Luka—they didn't visit his house, and his eerie docility as he stood in the shop, covered in blood with his hands on the meat, made them universally uncomfortable. The truth is that even after the baker's daughter went to buy meat, and found the shutters of the butcher's shop closed and the lights out, it took several days before anyone tried again.

At the time, most people assumed that Luka had simply left, that he had given up on the village and decided to brave the snowed-in pass and make for the city while the German occupation there was still new. In fact, the whole situation did not strike anyone as particularly unusual until the deaf-mute girl appeared in town two weeks later, with a fresher, brighter, slightly fuller face and that smile which suggested something new about her.

My grandfather had just returned from the timber pile and was pounding the snow from the bottoms of his shoes, when he saw the deaf-mute girl coming down the road, wrapped in Luka's fur coat. It was a cloudless winter afternoon, and villagers were leaning against their doorways. At first, only a few of them saw her, but by the time she reached the square the whole village was watching her as she made her way into the fabric shop. A few minutes later, my grandfather saw her cross the square with a parcel of Turkish silks under her arm, followed by a small procession of village women, who, while keeping their distance, were too intrigued to maintain the illusion of nonchalance.

It wasn't long before they were talking

about her, and my grandfather was listening. They were talking about her on every village corner, on every village doorstep, and he could hear them as he came and went from Mother Vera's house. Truths and half-truths drifted like shadows into conversations he was not intended to overhear.

At the greengrocer's, in line for pickling salts:

"I seen the deaf-mute today."

"The Muhammadan?"

"I seen her coming down from that house again, alone as you please."

"Where was Luka? She's driven him away, hasn't she?"

"Of course not. Isn't it plain? That tiger's got him. That tiger's got him, and now she's all alone, nobody bothering her, no one but the tiger."

Then, two days later, at the well:

"You hear? That tiger got Luka in the smokehouse."

"Sure he did. All strung up, ready for him."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, you don't think it was an accident, do you? That Luka, he never was none too clever. Still, that's what comes to you when you marry one of them Muhammadans from God knows where. Like a Gypsy, that girl. Probably strung him up with his own meat hooks, left him there for the tiger."

"That can't be true."

"Well, you believe it or don't. But I'm telling you, whatever happened to that Luka was no accident. And that baby—that's no accident, neither."

"What baby?"

"Haven't you seen her? Haven't you seen her coming into town? That girl's got a belly out to here, are you blind?"

"There's no belly."

"Oh, there's a belly—and I'll tell you something else. That belly ain't Luka's."

At the timber pile:

"I heard she carved him up, right in his own smokehouse, and then in comes the tiger for dinner, and she feeds him strips of her dead husband like it's feast day."

At church, holding Mother Vera's hand:

"That tiger. I seen him crossing the pasture by moonlight, big as a horse. Wild eyes in that tiger's head, I'm telling you. Froze me right down to my feet."

"What were you doing out so late?"

"That doesn't matter. Point is, that



tiger came all the way up to the door of Luka's house, and then he gets up and takes off his skin. Leaves it out on the step and goes in to see his wife."

"Imagine that."

"Don't have to, I seen it."

Who came up with that name for her? I can't say. It was only recently, after years of coming back to Galina in search of answers, that I learned about it. Up until the moment of Luka's disappearance, she was known only as "the deaf-mute girl" or "the Muhammadan." Then suddenly—after that first walk into town, when she wrapped herself in Turkish silks and admired herself in the fabric-shop mirror with the whole village staring in at her from the snow, after her belly had fully swollen, after it was clear that Luka wasn't coming back—she was referred to as "the tiger's wife."

Almost half a century later, on our weekly walks to the citadel zoo to see the tigers—always the tigers—my grandfather never referred to her as such. In fact, he rarely spoke of her at all, and when he did, it was to say, "I once knew a girl who loved tigers so much she almost became one herself." Because I was little, and my love of tigers came directly from him, I thought he was talking about me, making up a story in which I could imagine myself—which I did, for years. I did not even question or consider the reality of the girl until after my grandfather's death, when a letter of condolence arrived from the village, from an old man who called himself Jovo, who mentioned the tiger and that winter, and who said he could still see my grandfather with "The Jungle Book" in his pocket, running after the girl when no one else would go near her.

I was twenty-seven then, coming slowly out of the aftermath of the latest war, the second of my lifetime, my grief intensified by the realization that I had somehow misinterpreted my grandfather's preoccupation with tigers, and I couldn't understand why Jovo, of all the stories he must have known about my grandfather, could think to mention only this one. It drew me in—not immediately but over the course of months and then years, during which I gradually realized that she stood in the back of my mind like a person in a dream, a person whose face you cannot see.

I pulled her life together as well as I could—from the few stories that my grandmother reluctantly gave up, from the anecdotes of old villagers who were unwilling to talk, from the household myths of people who were overeager to talk—and I still don't know who or what she was. I cannot tell you for certain what happened to Luka, though I tend to side with those who say that he awoke, on the night he had left the girl to the tiger, to find her kneeling at the foot of his bed, her wrists skinned raw, holding the blacksmith's gun against his mouth.

In the end, even I find myself making things up to explain what can't be accounted for, just as the villagers have done these past seventy years. The girl's presence in town, smiling, unbruised, unafraid, coupled with Luka's sudden disappearance, invited endless speculation—stories that spread from door to door, never confirmed but always based on the same common denominator, always stemming from her secret, silent world with the tiger, from the loneliness that had drawn them together, both of them strangers in the same foreign land, she the relic of an old war, he barely a survivor of the one that had just begun.

The truth is that the people of Galina had no idea what they were witnessing, but with that ignorance they crutched their way over to something, a necessary something that justified a shared moment in a time that was otherwise completely inexplicable—a tiger that seemed to come from nowhere, a valiant but dead blacksmith, a vanished butcher, a war delayed by the weather. Something that eased the villagers' anxiety about the way things could come and go, even beyond the certainty of death; something they could cling to through the darkest nights of that winter, through the melting of the passes and the arrival of the Germans, who brought with them a real knowledge of change. By the end, so many details had piled up that the events themselves no longer mattered. All that remained was a story and its infinite variations—those of the village and of Jovo; that of the blacksmith's great-great-grandson; my grandfather's; and this one, which is mine—a hundred different wives for a single, solitary tiger, whose own disappearance no one had noticed, even after he had long since moved on. ♦

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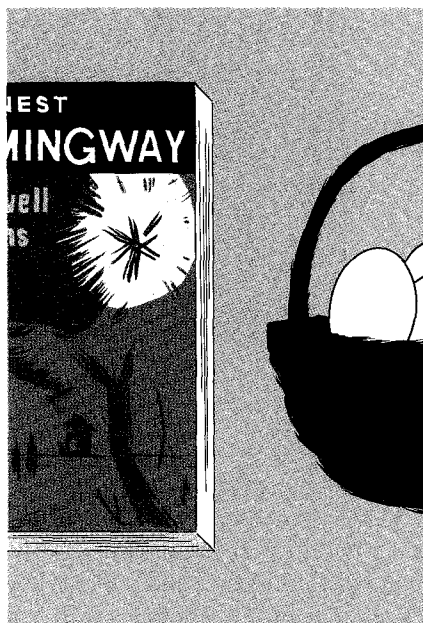
The summer after my year of involuntary service in the Chinese Army, I read Hemingway compulsively. I had always been shy and private, which had not helped me in the Army, but my experience would have been worse if it weren't for the novels—Dickens, Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, all in English—that I had taken with me to camp. Despite my rudimentary understanding of the language, most evenings, after lights-out, I would sneak away to the platoon storage room, where I could take a leave from my small miseries—the bullying of the officers, the dreariness of the combat drills—and enter a world filled with dramas of love and death and madness.

The barricade that I had built for myself with books began to collapse once I returned to Beijing. My mother, who had been born after her mother lost her sanity, used to tell my older sister and me that she would become our grandmother if we did not behave. That summer, she seemed to be fulfilling her threats. My sister had just started her first job, and had a boyfriend. I was nineteen, not yet in college, not old enough, in my parents' opinion, to have a boyfriend.

In Hardy's world, life could be bleak yet still picturesque; in Lawrence's, madness could be chilling yet maintain a mysterious attraction. There was no beauty in my mother's deterioration. Anything could lead to an eruption: the droning of cicadas from daybreak to sunset, the hot and humid smog of July, my sister's absence at a family dinner, my father's cooking. My mother's anger, though, was never targeted at me—I was her lost daughter returned from the Army.

I was reading "A Farewell to Arms" one night when my father came into my bedroom. The family was counting on me, he said. Neither he nor my sister could keep my mother from going mad. "She loves you more than your sister or me." I promised to try my best. When he left, I turned off the light. There was

not a trace of a breeze. Through the open window, I could hear a chess party, a group of old bachelors under a street lamp, laughingly cursing one another's moves on the chessboard. I listened to a man slapping mosquitoes, and wished that I were the hero of Hemingway's novel. I would have given up the use of both my legs to be in Italy,



drinking vermouth, watching horse races, and exchanging off-color jokes with my fellow-officers as the old bachelors were doing outside.

The next morning, when my father returned empty-handed from the grocery store, unable to buy our allotment of eggs because the eggs had sold out, my mother cursed him with the poisonous words that we had learned to live with. It was the last summer that eggs, cooking oil, flour, and rice were rationed, although they were now also available at a higher price—the "discussed price," as it was called. It was not that we couldn't afford the eggs, just as it was not the vegetables overcooked by my father or the perceived lack of reverence on my sister's part that was driving my mother to the

verge of madness. All her life, she had been plagued by the fear of losing her sanity, and that summer she seemed to be gathering her remaining strength to condemn the world—my father, mostly—for being unable to save her.

After lunch, when my mother's rage had still not abated, I stuffed the ration book into a straw basket. Where are you going, my mother asked. I clutched the Hemingway novel and said that I was going to buy eggs.

In the treeless courtyard of the grocery store, a line of about thirty people had already formed. The woman at the end of the line, sitting on a brick and shading her face with an open newspaper, told me that eggs would be sold again at four o'clock.

I stood under the July sun without moving for two hours, but the person waiting in line was far from my real self. Rather, I was Frederic retreating in the rain, Frederic swimming down the river to dodge bullets, and, later, Frederic in civilian clothes, reuniting with his love and sailing across a lake to Switzerland. All would be well if you lived in a novel; even when death crept up on you, the end would come in a few pages or a few lines.

Someone tapped on my shoulder. I looked up, and my father, avoiding my eyes, asked me to go home. He would wait for the eggs, he said.

I knew that it would be a relief for him, too, to stand in the sun, but I was not ready to return, not ready to take up my own life. I told him that I would wait. He nodded, and a few minutes later he came back with an icy-cold bottle of soda and a Popsicle stick with a number painted on it, which I was to return with the empty bottle for the twenty-fen deposit.

I watched my father walk away, a defeated man. The Popsicle stick was warm, the bottle was cold, and I was not Frederic. His war was over, beautifully, tragically, mercifully.

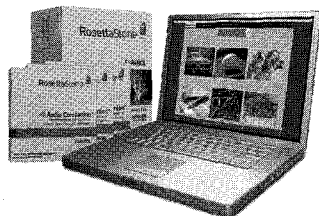
—Yiyun Li

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FICTION

OLD WOUNDS

BY EDNA O'BRIEN



We didn't have a flower garden. There were a few clumps of devil's pokers—spears of smoldering crimson when in bloom, and milky yellow when not. But my mother's sister and her family, who lived closer to the mountain, had a ravishing garden: tall festoons of pinkish-white roses, a long low border of glorious golden tulips, and red dahlias that, even in hot sun, exuded the coolness of velvet. When the wind blew in a certain direction, the perfume of the roses vanquished the smell of dung from the yard, where the sow and her young pigs spent their days foraging and snortling. My aunt was so fond of the piglets that she gave each litter pet names, sometimes the same pet names, which she appropriated from the romance novels she borrowed from the library and read by the light of a paraffin lamp, well into the night.

Our families had a falling out. For several years there was no communication between us at all, and, when the el-

ders met at funerals, they did not acknowledge one another and studiously looked the other way. Yet we were still intimately bound up with each other and any news of one family was of interest to the other, even if that news was disconcerting.

When the older and possibly more begrudging people had died off, and my cousin, Edward, and I were both past middle age—as he kept reminding me, he was twelve years older than I was and had been fitted with a pacemaker—we met again and set aside the lingering hostilities. About a year later, we paid a visit to the family graveyard, which was on an island in the broad stretch of the Shannon River. It was a balmy day in autumn, the graveyard spacious, uncluttered, the weathered tombs far more imposing than those in the graveyard close to the town. They were limestone tombs, blotched with white lichen, great splashes of it, which added an improvised gaiety to the scene. Swallows were

SIMON BURCH

swooping and scudding in and out of the several sacred churches, once the abode of monks but long since uninhabited, the roofs gone but the walls and ornamental doorways still standing, gray and sturdy, with their own mosaics of lichen. The swallows did not so much sing as caw and gabble, their circuits a marvel of speed and ingenuity.

Now I was seeing the graveyard in daylight with my cousin, but once, a few years before, I had gone there surreptitiously. The youngster who rowed me across worked for a German man who bred pheasants on one of the other islands and was able to procure a boat. We set out just before dark. The boy couldn't stop talking or singing. And he smoked like a chimney.

"Didn't yer families fight?" he asked, when I trained a torch on the names of my ancestors carved on a tall headstone. Undaunted by my silence, the boy kept prying and then, with a certain insouciance, informed me that the family fight had come about because of what Edward had done to his widowed mother, flinging her out once she had signed the place over to him.

"That's all in the past," I said curtly, and recited the names, including those of a great-grandmother and a great-grandfather, a Bridget and a Thomas, of whom I knew nothing. Others I had random remembrances of. In our house, preserved in a china cabinet, on frayed purple braid, were the medals of an uncle who had been a soldier of the Irish Free State and had met with a violent death, aged twenty-eight. I remembered my grandfather falling into a puddle in the yard, when he came home drunk from a fair, and laughing jovially. My grandmother was stern and made me drink hot milk with pepper before sending me up to bed early. She was forever dinning into me the stories of our forebears and how they had suffered, our people driven from their holdings and their cabins down the years. She said that the knowledge of eviction and the fear of the poor-house ran in our blood. I must have been seven or eight at the time. For Sunday Mass, she wore a bonnet made of black satin, with little felt bobbins that hopped against her cheek in the judder, as my grandfather drove helter-skelter so as not to be late. The traps and the sidecars were tethered outside the chapel gates, and the

horses seemed to know one another and to nod lazily. As a treat, my grandmother let me smell a ball of nutmeg, which was kept in a round tin that had once held cough pastilles. The feather bed, which I shared with her, sagged almost to the floor and the pillow slips smelled of flour, because they were made from flour bags that she had bleached and sewn. My grandfather, who snored, slept in a settle bed down in the kitchen, near the fire.

About two years after my clandestine visit to the graveyard, Edward and I met by chance at a garden center. I was home on holiday and had gone to buy broom shrubs for my nephew. As we approached each other on a pathway between a line of funereal yew trees, my cousin saw me, then pretended not to and feigned interest in a huge tropical plant, which bore a resemblance to rhubarb. Deciding to brave it, I said his name, and, turning, he asked with a puzzled look, "Who do I have here?" although he well knew. And so the ice was broken. Yes, his eyes were bad, as he later told me, but he had indeed recognized me and felt awkward. As we got to be friends, I learned of the journeys to the eye doctor in Dublin, of the treatments required before the doctor could operate, and when I sent him flowers at the hospital the nurse, bearing them to his bedside, said, "Well, someone loves you," and he was proud to tell her that it was me.

We corresponded. His letters were so immediate. They brought that mountain terrain to life, along with the unvarying routine of his days: out to the fields straight after breakfast, herding, mending fences, fixing gates, clearing drains, and often, as he said, sitting on a wall for a smoke, to drink in his surroundings. He loved the place. He said that people who did not know the country—did not know nature and did not stay close to it—could never understand the loss that they were feeling. I felt that, in an oblique way, he was referring to me. He wrote these letters at night by the fire, after his wife had gone up to bed. Her health was poor, her sleep fitful, so she went to bed early to get as many hours as she could. He sometimes, while writing, took a sup of whiskey, but he said he was careful not to get too fond of it.

He knew the lake almost as well as he knew the mountain, and, through his binoculars, from his front porch he watched the arrival of the dappers in the month of May, a whole fleet of boats from all over the country and even from foreign parts. They arrived as the hatched mayflies came out of the nearby bushes and floated above the water, in bacchanalian swarms, so that the fishermen were easily able to catch them and fix them to the hooks of their long rods. He himself had fished there every Sunday of his life, trolling from his boat with wet or dry bait, and so canny was he that the neighbors were quite spiteful, saying that he knew exactly where the fish lay hiding, and, hence, there was not a pike or a perch or a trout left for anyone else.

He was a frugal man. In Dublin, he would walk miles from the railway station to the eye hospital, often having to ask the way and frequently going astray because of his ailing sight. His wife and son would scold him for not taking a taxi, to which he always said, "I could if I wanted to." Yet I recalled that time when, young, he had brought my sister and me a gift, the same gift, a red glassy bracelet on an elasticated band. The raised red beads were so beautiful that I licked them as I would jellies. My sister was older than me, and it was for her that he had a particular fondness. They flirted, though I did not know then that it was called that. They teased each other, and then ran around the four walls of our sandstone house, and eventually fell into an embrace, breathless from their hectic exertions. I was wild with jealousy and snapped on the band of my new bracelet. They aped dancing, as if in a ballroom, she swooning, her upper back reclining on the curve of his forearm as he sang, "You'll be lonely, little sweetheart, in the spring," and she gazed up at him, daring him to kiss her. He was handsome then, not countrified, like most of the farmers or their grown sons, and he wore a long white belted motor coat. He had a mop of silky brown hair, and his skin was sallow.

I met Grania, the woman to whom he got engaged some two or three years later, on the way home from school one day. She stopped me and asked if I was his cousin, though she knew well

who I was and pointedly ignored the two girls who were with me. She asked me jokingly if she was making the right choice, as someone had warned her that my cousin was “bad news.” She repeated the words “bad news” with a particular relish. She was wearing a wraparound red dress and red high-heeled toeless sandals, which looked incongruous but utterly beautiful on that dusty godforsaken road. She was like flame, a flame in love with my cousin, and her eyes danced with mischief. It was not long after they got married that he called his mother out into the hay shed and informed her that his wife felt unwanted in the house and that, for the sake of his marriage, he had to ask her to leave. Thus the coolness from our side of the family. There was general outrage in the parish that an only son had pitched his mother out, and pity for the mother, who had to walk down that road, carrying her few belongings and her one heirloom, a brass lamp with a china shade, woebegone, like a woman in a ballad. She stayed with us for a time, and did obliging things for my mother, being, as she was, in her own eyes, a mendicant, and once, when she let fall a tray of good china cups and saucers, she knelt down and said, “I’ll replace these,” even though we knew she couldn’t. In the evenings, she often withdrew from the kitchen fire to sit alone in our cold vacant room, with a knitted shawl over her shoulders, brooding. Eventually, she

rented a room in the town, and my mother gave her cane chairs, cushions, and a pale-green candlewick bedspread, to give the room a semblance of home.

But, with so many dead, there was no need for estrangement anymore.

Edward sent me a photograph of a double rainbow, arcing from the sky above his house across a patchwork of small green fields and over the lake toward the hill that contained the graves of the Leinster men. On the back of the photograph he had written the hour of evening at which the rainbow had appeared and lasted for about ten minutes, before eking its watery way back into the sky. I put it on the mantelpiece for luck. The rainbow, with its seven bands of glorious color, always presaged happiness. In his next letter and in answer to my question, he said that the Leinster men were ancient chieftains who had come for a banquet in Munster, where they were insulted and subsequently murdered, but that someone had thought to bury them facing their own province.

Each summer, when I went back to Ireland, we had outings, outings that he had been planning all year. One year, mysteriously, I found that we were driving far from his farm, up an isolated road, with nothing in sight except clumps of wretched rushes and the abandoned ruins from famine times. Then, almost at

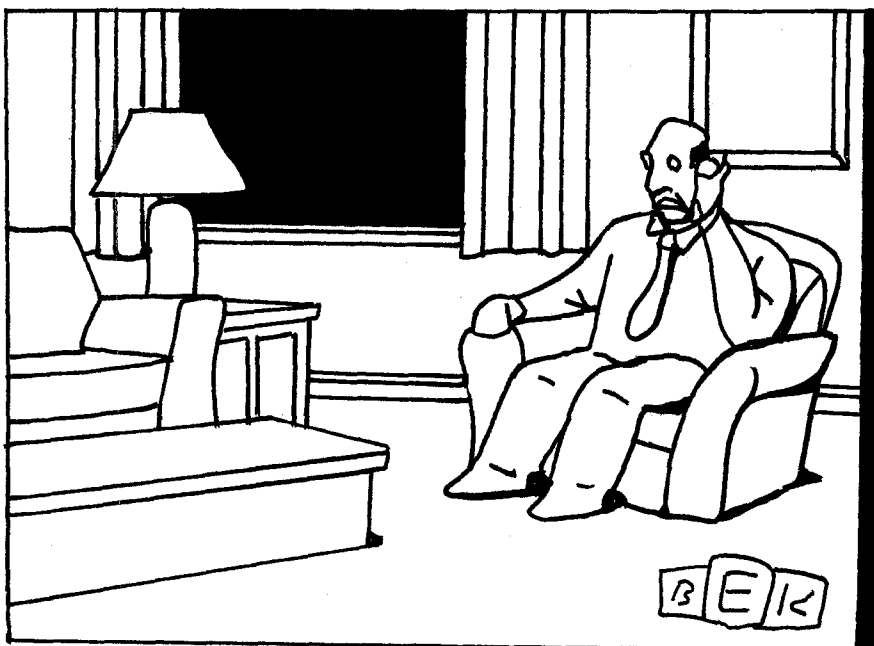
the peak, he parked the jeep and took two shotguns out of the boot. He had dreamed all year of teaching me to shoot and he set about it with a zest. He loved shooting. As a youngster, unbeknownst to his mother, he had cycled to Limerick two nights a week to learn marksmanship in a gallery. With different gundogs, he shot pheasants, grouse, ducks, and snipe, but his particular favorites were the woodcock, which came all the way from Siberia or Chernobyl. He described them to me, silhouetted against an evening sky—they disliked light—their beaks like crochet hooks, then furtively landing in a swamp or on a cowpat to catch insects or partake of the succulence of the water. Yet he could not forgo the thrill of shooting them, then picking them up, feeling the scant flesh on the bone, and snapping off a side feather to post to an ornithologist in England. September 1st, he said, was the opening of duck shooting on the lake, a hundred guns or more out there, *bang-banging* in all directions. Later, adjourning to the pub, the sportsmen swapped stories of the day’s adventure, comparing what they’d shot and how they’d shot and what they’d missed—a camaraderie such as he was not used to.

For a target, he affixed a saucepan lid to a wooden post. Then, taking the lighter of the two guns, he loaded it with brass bullets, handed it to me, and taught me to steady it, to put my finger on the trigger and look down through the nozzle of the long blue-black barrel.

“Now shoot,” he said in a belligerent voice, and I shot so fearfully and, at the same time, so rapidly that I believed I was levitating. The whole thing felt unreal, bullets bursting and zapping through the air, some occasionally clattering off the side of the tin lid and my aim so awry that even to him it began to be funny. He had started to lay out a picnic on a tartan rug—milky tea in a bottle, hard-boiled eggs, slices of brown bread already buttered—when out of thin air a huge black dog appeared, like a phantom or an animal from the underworld, its snarls strange and spiteful. Its splayed paws were enormous and mud-spattered, its eyes bloodshot, the sockets bruised, as if it were fresh from battle.

“He’ll smell your fear,” my cousin said.

“I can’t help it,” I said and lowered



“Just sitting here waiting for Facebook to go away.”

the gun, thinking that this might, in some way, appease the animal. There wasn't a stone or a stick to throw at it. There was nothing up there, only the fearsome dog and us and the saucypan lid rattling like billio.

Edward knew every dog for miles around, and every breed of dog, and said that this freak was a "blow-in." Eventually, he sacrificed every bit of food in order to get the animal to run, throwing each piece farther and farther, as, matador-like, he followed bearing the stake on which the lid was nailed, shouting in a voice that I could not believe was his, so barbaric and inhuman did it sound. The dog, wearying of the futility of this, decided to gallop off over the edge of the mountain and disappear from sight.

"Jesus," my cousin said.

We sat in the jeep because, as he said, we were in no hurry to get home. We didn't talk about family things, his wife or my ex-husband, my mother or his mother, possibly fearing that it would open up old wounds. There had been so many differences between the two families—over greyhounds, over horses, over some rotten bag of seed potatoes—and always with money at the root of it. My father, in his wild tempers, would claim that my mother's father had not paid her dowry and would go to his house in the dead of night, shouting up at a window to demand it.

Instead, we talked of dogs.

Having been a huntsman all his life, Edward had several dogs, good dogs, faithful dogs, retrievers, pointers, setters, and springers. His favorite was an Irish red setter, which he called Maire Ruadh, for a red-haired noblewoman who had her husbands pitched into the Atlantic once she tired of them. He had driven all the way to Kildare, in answer to an advertisement, to vet this pedigree dog, and his wife had decided to come along. Straightaway they had liked the look of her; they had studied the pedigree papers, paid out a hefty sum, and there and then given her her imperious name. On the way back, they'd had high tea at a hotel in Roscrea, and, what with the price he'd paid for Maire Ruadh and the tea and the cost of the petrol, it had proved to be an expensive day.

I told him the story of an early morning in a café in Paris, a straggle of people—two men, each with a bottle

of pale-amber beer, and a youngish woman, writing in a ruled copybook, her dog at her feet, quiet, suppliant. When she finished her essay, or whatever it was that she had been writing, she groped in her purse and all of a sudden the obedient dog reared to get away. She pulled on the lead, dragging it back beside her, the dog resistant and down on its haunches. Grasping the animal by the crown of its head, she opened its mouth very wide and with her other hand dispatched some powdered medicine from a sachet onto its tongue. Pinned as it was, the dog could vent its fury only by kicking, which got it nowhere. Once the dog had downed the powder, she patted it lovingly and it answered in kind, with soft whimpers.

"Man's best friend," my cousin said, a touch dolefully.

We came back by a different route because he wanted me to see the ruin of a cottage where a workman of ours had lived. As a child, I had been dotingly in love with the man and had intended to elope with him, when I came of age. The house itself was gone and all that remained was a tumbledown porch with some overgrown stalks of geranium, their scarlet blooms prodigal in that godforsaken place. We didn't even get out of the car. Yet nearby we came upon a scene of such gaiety that it might have been a wedding party. Twenty or so people sitting out of doors at a long table strewn with lanterns, eating, drinking, and calling for toasts in different tongues. Behind the cacophony of voices we could hear the strains of music from a melodeon. It was the hippies who had come to the district, the "blow-ins," as Edward called them, giving them the same scathing name as the fearsome dog. They had made Ireland their chosen destination when the British government, in order to avoid paying them social benefits, gave them a lump sum to scoot it. They crossed the Irish Sea and found ideal havens by streams and small rivers, building houses, growing their own vegetables and their own marijuana, and, he had been told on good authority, taking up wife-swapping. He had the native's mistrust of the outsider. We had to come to a stop because some of their ducks were waddling across the road. We couldn't see them in the dusk but



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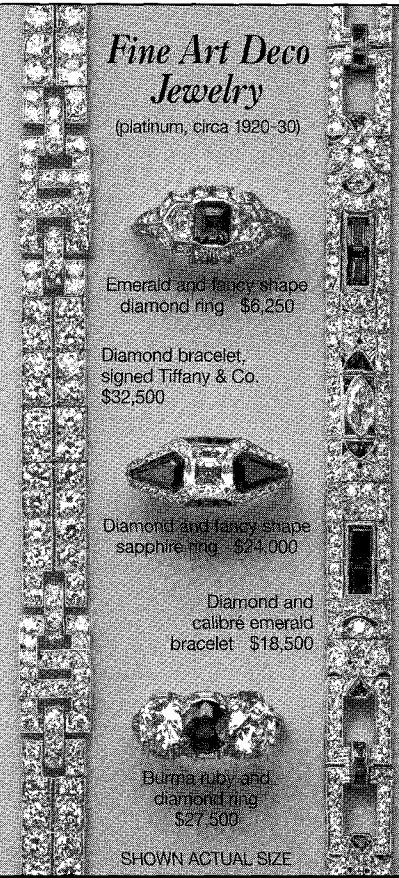
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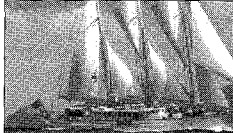
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heard their quacking, and then some children with their faces painted puce came to the open window of the jeep, holding lighted sods of turf, serenading us.

"Hi, guv," one of the men at the table called out, but my cousin did not answer.

It was in his back yard, still sitting in the jeep, that he began to cry. As we drove in, he could see by the light in the upstairs room that his wife had gone to bed early, so I declined his invitation to have a cup of tea. He cried for a long time. The stars were of the same brightness and fervor as the stars I had seen in childhood and, though distant, seemed to have been put there for us, as if someone in the great house called Heaven had gone from room to room, turning on this constellation of lamps. He was crying, he said, because the families had been divided for so long. He had even tried to find me in England, had written to some priest who served in a parish in Kilburn, because, according to legend, Kilburn was where Irish people flocked and had fights on Saturday nights outside pubs and pool halls. The priest couldn't trace me but suggested a parish in Wimbledon, where I had indeed lived for a time, before fleeing from bondage. What hurt my cousin most was the fact that his wife's cousins, as she frequently reminded him, had kept in touch, had sent Christmas cards and visited in the summer, each of them rewarded with a gift of a pair of fresh trout. In his wife's estimation, his cousins, meaning my family, were heartless. It took him a while to calm down. The tissues that he took from his pockets were damp shreds. Eventually, somewhat abashed, he said, "Normally, I am not an emotional man," then, backing the car toward the open gate, he drove down the mountain road to the small town where my nephew lived.

One evening soon after that, when I telephoned him from London, he said that he had known it would be me; he had come in from the fields ten minutes before the Angelus tolled, because of this hunch he had that I would be ringing. We talked at our ease: the cornea transplant he had recently undergone, the weather as ever wet and squally. He told me that it was unlikely he would

make silage anymore and therefore intended to sell the cattle that he had fattened all summer. He might, he said, buy yearlings the following May, if his health held up. He did not say how happy the call had made him, but I could feel the pitch of excitement in his voice as he told me again that he had come in early from the fields because he knew that I would ring.

We took to talking on the phone about once a month. When his wife went to Spain with their son, from whom he was estranged, he wrote to tell me that he would phone me on a particular evening at seven o'clock. I knew then that these conversations buoyed him up.

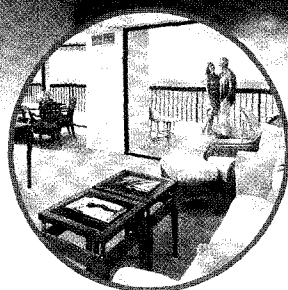
It was the third summer of our reunion, and he had the boat both tarred and painted a Prussian blue. We were bound for the graveyard. The day could not have been more perfect: sunshine, a soft breeze, Edward slipping the boat out with one oar through a thicket of lush bamboo and reeds, a scene that could easily have taken place somewhere in the East. He took a loop away from the direction of the island, in order to get the wind at our backs, then turned on the engine and, despite his worsening sight, steered with unfailing instinct, because he had, he said, a map of the entire lake inside his head. The water was a plateau of dazzling silver, waves barely nudging the boat. We couldn't hear each other because of the noise of the engine but sat quiet, content, the hills all around us sloping toward us, enfolding us in their friendliness. It was only when we reached the pier that I realized how poor his sight was—by the difficulty he had tying the rope to its ballast and reading the handwritten sign that said "Bull on island."

"We'll have to brave it," he said. Our headway was cautious, what with the steep climb, the fear of the bull, and, presently, a herd of bullocks fixing us with their stupid glare, and a few of them making abortive attempts to charge at us. Once through the lychgate that led to the graveyard, we sat and availed ourselves of the port wine that I had brought in a hip flask. Sitting on the low wall opposite the resting place of our ancestors, he said what a pity it was that my mother had chosen not to

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be buried there. Her explanation was that she wished to be near a roadside so that passersby might bless themselves for the repose of her soul, but I had always felt that there was another reason, a hesitation in her heart.

"I came here twice since I last saw you . . . to think," he said.

"To think?"

"I was feeling rotten. . . . I came here and talked to them." He did not elaborate, but I imagined that he might have been brooding over unfinished business with his mother, or maybe his marriage, which had grown bleaker amid the desolations of age. It was not money he was worried about, because, as he told me, he had been offered princely sums for fields of his that bordered the lake; people were pestering him, developers and engaged couples, to sell them sites, and he had refused resolutely.

"My wants are few," he said and rolled a cigarette, regaining his good humor and rejoicing at the fact that we had picked such a great day for our visit. He surprised me by telling a story of how, after my mother died, my father had gone to the house of Grania's older sister, Oonagh, recently returned from Australia, and had proposed to her. Without any pretense at courtship, he had simply asked her to marry him. He had needed a wife. He had even pressed her to think it over, been narked at her refusal, and gone on the batter for several weeks. I could not imagine anyone other than my mother in our kitchen, in our upstairs or downstairs rooms; she was the presiding spirit of the place.

He then said that Grania had also expressed a wish to be buried in a grave near the town and he could not understand why anyone would want to be in a place where the remains were squeezed in like sardines.

Birds whirled in and out, such a freedom to their movements, such an airiness, as if the whole place belonged to them and we were the intruders. He spoke of souls buried there in pagan times, then Christian times, the monks in the monasteries fasting, praying, and most likely having to fend off invaders. It was a place of pilgrimage, where all-night Masses were celebrated; he pointed to boulders with little cavities, where the pilgrims had dipped their hands and their feet in the blessed water.



WARP

"Man! I just had to pull another all-dayer."

"Hallowed ground," I said. The grassy mound that covered our family grave was a rich warm green strewn with speckled wildflowers.

"You have as much right to be there as I have," he said suddenly, and my heart leaped with a childish joy.

"Do I really?"

"I'm telling you . . . you'll be right beside me," he said, and he stood up and took my hand, and we walked over the mound, measuring it, as it were, hands held in solidarity. It meant everything to me. I would be the only one from our branch of the family to lie with relatives whom I had always admired as being more stoic than us and truer to the hardships of the land.

When his wife got sick the next winter, his letters became infrequent. He rarely went out to the fields, having to tend her, and the only help was a twice-weekly visit from a jubilee nurse, who came to change her dressings. They could not tell whether it was

the cancer causing all the wounds down her spine or whether she was allergic to the medicines that she had been prescribed. Sometimes, he wrote, she roared with pain, said that the pain was hammering against her chest, and begged to be dead. I was abroad when she died and he telephoned to let me know. A message was passed on to me and I was able to send roses by Interflora. To my surprise, I learned that she had been buried on the island after all, and on the phone, when I later spoke to him, he described the crossing of the funeral procession, the first boat for the flowers, as was the custom, then himself and his son in the next boat, and the mourners following behind.

"A grand crowd . . . good people," he said, and I realized that he was vexed with me for not having been there. I asked whether she had died suddenly, and he answered that he would rather not describe the manner of her passing. Nor did he say why she had changed her mind

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about being buried in the family plot.

I could not tell what had caused it, but a chasm had sprung up between us. The friendliness had gone from his voice when I rang, and his letters were formal now. I wondered if he felt that his friendship with me had somehow compromised his love for his wife, or if he was in the grip of that contrariness which comes, or so I feared, with advancing years. A home help, a very young girl, visited him three days a week, put groceries in the fridge, cooked his dinner, and occasionally went upstairs to Hoover and change the sheets.

"Maybe you should give her a bonus," I said, suggesting that she would then come every day.

"The state pays her plenty," he said, disgruntled by my remark.

I got out of the habit of phoning him, but one Christmas morning, in a burst of sentiment, I rang, hoping that things might be smoothed over. Over-politely, he answered a few questions about the weather, his health, a large magnifying machine that he had got for reading, and then quite suddenly he

blurted it out. He had been looking into the cost of a tombstone for his wife and himself and had found that it was going to be very expensive.

"Have you thought of what you intend to do?" he asked.

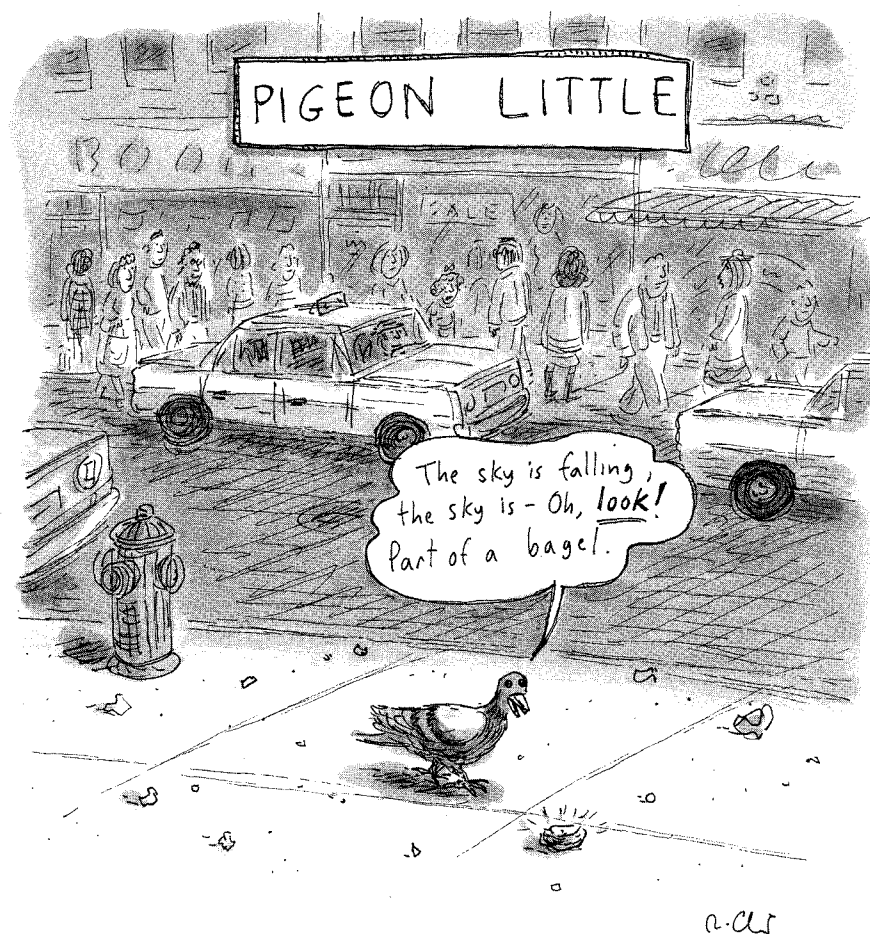
"I haven't," I said flatly.

"Maybe you would like to purchase yours now," he said.

"I don't understand the question," I said, although I understood it all too clearly and a river of outrage ran through me. I felt that he had violated kinship and decency. The idea of being interred in the graveyard beside him seemed suddenly odious to me. Yet, perversely, I was determined not to surrender my place under the grassy slope.

There were a few seconds of wordless confrontation and then the line went dead. He had hung up. I rang back, but the telephone was off the hook, and that night, when I called again, there was no answer; he probably guessed that it was me.

It was August and pouring rain when I travelled to the local hospital to see him. A nurse, with her name tag, "M. Gleeson," met me in the hallway.



She was a stout woman with short bobbed hair and extremely affable. She eyed me up and down, guessed correctly whom I had come to see, and said that her mother had known me well, but, of course, I wouldn't remember, being citified. If my cousin had come in at Easter, things might have been different now, she said, but, as it was, the news was not promising.

"How's the humor?" I asked tentatively.

"Cantankerous," she said, adding that most patients knew their onions, knew how to play up to her, realizing that she would be the one to wash them, feed them, and bring them cups of tea at all hours, but not cousin Edward.

"I should have brought flowers," I said.

"Ah, aren't you flower enough!" she said and herded me toward the open door of his little room, announcing me bluffly.

He was in an armchair with a fawn dressing gown over his pajamas, as thin as a rake, his whole body drooping, and when he looked up and saw me, or perhaps only barely saw me, but heard my name, his eyes narrowed with hatred. I saw that I should not have come.

"I couldn't find anywhere to buy you a flower," I said.

"A flower?" he said with disdain.

"They don't sell them in the garden center anymore—only trees and plants," I explained, and the words hung in the air. The rain sloshed down the narrow windowpane as if it couldn't reach the sill quickly enough, then overflowed onto a patch of ground that was rife with nettle and dock.

"How are you?" I asked after some time.

He pondered the question and then replied, coldly, "That's what I keep asking myself—how am I?"

I wanted to put things right. I wanted to say, "Let's talk about the tombstone and then forget about it forever," but I couldn't. The way he glared at me was beginning to make me angry. I felt the urge to shake him. On the bedside table there was a peeled mandarin orange that had been halved but left untouched. There will be another time, I kept telling myself. Except that I knew he was dying. He had

that aghastness which shows itself, months, often a year, before the actual death. We were getting nowhere. The tension was unbearable, rain splashing down, and he with his head lowered, having a colloquy with himself. I reminded myself how hardworking, how frugal, he had been all his life, never admitting to the loneliness that he must have felt, and I thought, Why don't I throw my arms around him and say something? But I couldn't. I simply couldn't. It wouldn't have been true. It would have been false. I knew that he despised me for the falsity of my coming and the falsity of my not bringing the matter up, and that he despised himself equally for having done something irreparable.

"Have you been to the grave?" he asked sharply.

"No, but I'm going this afternoon. I've booked the boatman," I said.

"You'll find Grania's name and mine on my grandfather's tomb...chiselled," he said.

"Chiselled." The word seemed to cut through the shafts of suffocating air between us.

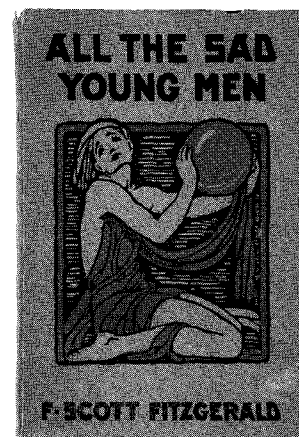
I knew that he wanted me to leave.

As it turned out, the trip across the lake was cancelled because the weather was so foul. The boatman deemed it too rough and too dangerous. It was the day of a big horse race and he and his wife were in their front room with the fire lit, the television on, and an open bottle of Tia Maria on a little brass table.

Strange to say, neither Edward's name nor Grania's was on the tombstone when I went to his funeral, on a drizzling wet day that November. The grave had already been dug. "Ten fel-las," as Jacksie the boatman said, had turned up to do the job. Buckets of water had been bailed out of it, but the clay itself was still wet, with a dark boggy seepage. His coffin would rest on his wife's, hers still new-looking, its varnish undimmed, and, in an exchange of maudlin condolences, women remarked that most likely Grania was in there still, waiting to welcome him.

Underneath his wife's remains were those of his mother, the woman she had quarrelled with and driven out of her

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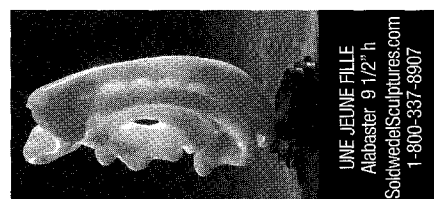
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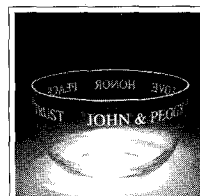
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home, and down in succession were others—husbands, wives, children, all with their differences silenced. When my turn came, I would rest on Edward's coffin, with runners underneath to cushion the weight. These thoughts were passing through my mind as the priest shook holy water over the grave and three young girls threw in red roses. I did not recognize them. Neighbors' children, I assumed. They threw the roses with a certain theatricality, and one of them blushed a fierce crimson. Death had not yet touched them.

When the priest started the Rosary, there were nudges and blatant sighs, as it became clear that he was going to recite the full five decades, and not just one decade, as some priests did. He was in a wheelchair and had to have a boat all to himself. Men had had to support him up the gravel path to the graveyard. Despite his condition, his voice boomed out onto the lake, where the water birds shivered in the rushes, and over it to the main road, where crows had perched in a neat sepulchral line on the telephone wires as the coffin was being removed from the hearse. The mourners answered the Our Fathers and the Hail Marys with a routine solemnity, and the gravediggers stood by their shovels, expressionless, witnessing a scene such as they witnessed every other day.

At the end of the prayers, a purple cloth was laid over Edward's coffin, the undertaker tucking it in as if it were a living person that he was putting down to bed. I felt no sorrow, or, to be more precise, I felt nothing, only numbness. I watched a single flake of snow drift through the cold air, discolored and lonesome-looking.

Most of the people ambled down toward the pier, but a few stayed behind to watch as the men closed the grave. The wreaths and artificial flowers in their glass domes were lifted off the strip of green plastic carpet, which had been temporarily placed over the grave to lessen the sense of grimness. The gravediggers shovelled hurriedly, gravel and small stones hopping off the coffins and the purple sheath, and finally they unrolled the piece of turf and laid it back where it belonged. Wildflowers of a darkish purple bloomed on graves nearby, but on the strip that had been dug up they had expired. The undertaker, who was full of cheer, said that

they would grow again, as the birds scattered seeds all over and flowers of every description sprouted up.

On the way down the steep path, Nurse Gleeson tugged at my arm as if we were old friends. First it was a slew of compliments about the tweed suit I was wearing, singling out the heather flecks in it, and she said what a pity it was that she was size 18, as I could not pass it on to her when I grew tired of it. Then it was my head scarf, an emerald green with an assortment of other garish colors, quite inappropriate for a funeral, except that it was the only one I had thrown into my suitcase. She remembered my flying visit to the hospital, had, in fact, gone to get a tray of tea and biscuits, when, holy crapes, on returning to the room, she saw that I had vanished.

"Did he say anything?" I asked.

"Oh, he sang dumb," she said, then, gripping my arm even tighter, she indicated that there was something important that she needed to impart to me.

A few days before the end, my cousin had asked her for a sheet of notepaper in order to write me a letter. There was a cranberry bowl in the kitchen at home, which he wished me to have, he had said. As it happened, she had found the sheet of paper in the top pocket of his pajamas after he died, but with nothing written on it.

"The strength gave out," she said and asked if I knew which bowl it was. I could see it quite clearly, as I had seen it one day, while waiting in his kitchen for a sun shower to pass, rays of sun alighting on it, divesting it of its sheath of brown dust, the red ripples flowing through it, so that it seemed to liquefy, as if it were being newly blown. It had been full of things—screwdrivers, a tiny torch, receipts, and pills for pain. When I admired it, he turned the contents out onto the table and held it in the palm of his hand, proudly, like a chalice of warm wine.

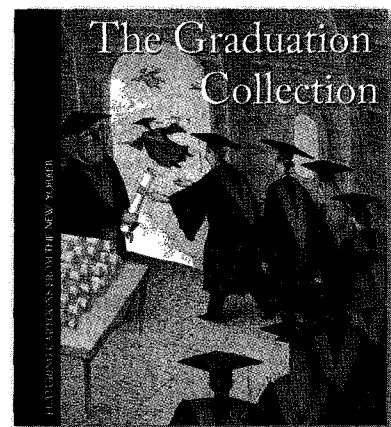
I hoped that the unwritten letter had been an attempt at reconciliation.

Sitting in the boat with a group of friendly people, I could still see the island, shrouded in a veil of thin gray rain. Why, I asked myself, did I want to be buried there? Why, given the different and gnawing perplexities? It was not love and it was not hate but something for which there is no name, because to name it would be to deprive it of its truth. ♦

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TWO EMMAS

Late on February nights when my circling mind returns to our summer cottage in Maine, it often fastens on the books stuffed into two narrow but tall bookshelves that face each other there on opposite sides of our ill-lit living room. Paperbacks for the most part, they are survivors of a rigorous multi-summer select-and-toss procedure, which is to say that every one has been read or reread and then put back up there again for the second or third or fourth time, perhaps to be read again someday. "Good Behaviour," "Endurance," "Framley Parsonage," "Get Shorty," "Daisy Miller," "Dracula," "Butterfield 8," "Goodbye to All That," "Why Did I Ever," "Oblomov," "The Heart of the Matter," "Sailing Days on the Penobscot," "The Moonstone," "Possession," "Morte d'Urban," "Quartet," "Emma" . . . there are many dozens more. I know these beauties so well that I can see the shelf and almost the slot where each one belongs. Our "Emma" is a slim little hardback, in the old pinkish-red Everyman's Library edition. Three or four of the scattered Evelyn Waugh come in that crimson hardback edition, but "Scoop" was briefly left out in a shower one afternoon—I think by a daughter—and is thus thicker and paler than the others. Other fat books—"Martin Chuzzlewit," "Orley Farm," "The Forsyte Saga," and the like—are in paperback, and wait to get taken down during one of those tedious weeks of Down East fog.

It's a kick for me to think of these arrayed words and sentences and pages sitting in the dark at about nine degrees, with the wind battering at the closed-up shutters and our old house groaning and creaking in the night, and our library waiting there for us to come back again in summer. Then my wife, Carol, and I and maybe a visiting niece

will be sitting on our porch reading, and now and then raising our gaze to the glittering adjacent bay.

There's a sweet dab of guilt attached to rereading. Yes, we really should be into something new, for we need to know all about credit-default swaps and Darwin and steroids and the rest, but not just now, please. My first



vacation book this year will be like my first swim, a venture into assured bliss. This summer, I mean, I could be starting with Margaret Drabble's "The Garrick Year," a 1964 novel preserved in a bendy, yellowing old paperback so popular at our place that it resembles a leftover picnic sandwich. It's a short, romantic novel about actors and the theatre and marriage and sex and babies, written when Drabble was twenty-four years old—it's her second novel—and married to an actor, Clive Swift, and both were members of the Royal Shakespeare Company. End of bibliography: this book belongs to Drabble's heroine, Emma Evans, who is married to the dashing, muscular Welsh leading man David Evans, and the mother of their very young children, Flora and Joseph. At the book's beginning, she is bitterly unwilling for him to take them all off, along with their French nanny, from London to Hereford for a festival season of repertory. She loses that battle but little else. Emma, the

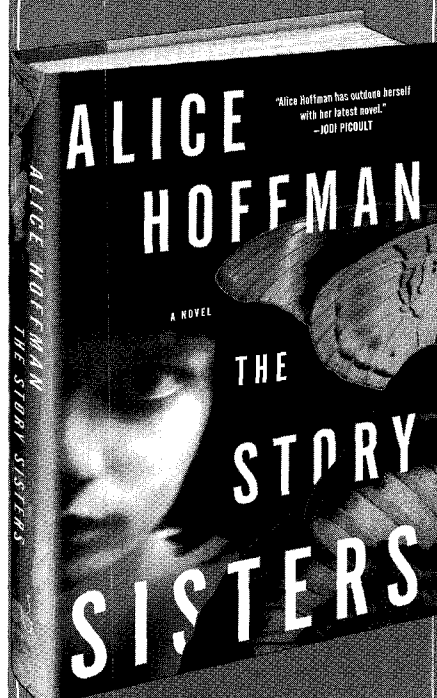
daughter of a theologian, is tall—taller than David—and sometimes works as a model, and she is extremely, extravagantly intelligent. The book is told in the first person, *her* first person, which means that there are many unsparingly critical and deliciously bitter views of the vanity of actors and the babyish needs of actors' lives and, in many cases, their stupidity. David is not stupid but deeply entranced with himself; their squabbles, while entertainingly harsh and vigorous, are never hostile. They're both still young, though ground down, as she puts it, and it's nearly in relief that Emma begins an almost terminally delayed—they never have any time for each other—love affair with David's boss and director, the successful and attractively grownup Wyndham Farrar.

But never mind all this. What we're here for and why we want to stay in "The Garrick Year" is Emma's eccentric smarts and her egotism and punishing self-assessments. Speaking at one point of two-year-old Flora, she says, "I take her too seriously, my daughter, as I take all others." She finds the tension between herself and Wyndham dismayingly adolescent—"I was shut up once more in an artificial world of waiting"—whereas he and we are rediscovering the terrific sexual power of brains. "You have your attractions, too," he says to her. "The attraction of the difficult."

There are three convincing surprises in the late going (Flora turning on the gas while at play is one of them), but it's the short, flashing bursts of conversation that rush us along. Things keep happening, with people like this around, but never easily or without sadness or letdown. On the plus side also, nobody says, "I love you." Margaret Drabble moved on to write deeper and more accomplished novels after this, but not one of them is quite so alive.

—Roger Angell

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LIFE AND LETTERS

THE AGE OF GENIUS

The legend of Bruno Schulz.

BY DAVID GROSSMAN

An afternoon in spring, Easter Sunday, 1933. Behind the reception desk of a small hotel in Warsaw stands Magdalena Gross. Gross is a sculptor, and her modest family hotel serves as a meeting place for writers and intellectuals. In the hotel lobby sits a Jewish girl of about twelve, a native of Lodz. Her parents have sent her to Warsaw for a school holiday. A small man, thin and pale, enters the hotel, carrying a suitcase. He is a bit stooped, and to the girl—her name is Jakarda Goldblum—he seems frightened. Gross asks him who he is. "Schulz," he says, adding, "I am a teacher, I wrote a book and I—"

She interrupts him. "Where did you come from?"

"From Drohobycz."

"And how did you get here?"

"By train, by way of Gdansk Bridge."

The woman teases him. "*Tanz?* You are a dancer?"

"What? No, not at all." He flinches, worries the hem of his jacket. She laughs merrily, spouting wisecracks, winking past him at the girl.

"And what exactly are you doing here?" she asks finally, and he whispers, "I am a high-school teacher. I wrote a book. Some stories. I have come to Warsaw for one night, to give it to Madame Nalkowska." Magdalena Gross snickers, looks him up and down. Zofia Nalkowska is a renowned Polish author and playwright. She is also affiliated with the prestigious publishing house Rój. With a little smile, Gross asks, "And how will your book get to Madame Nalkowska?"

The man stammers, averts his eyes, yet he speaks insistently: Someone has told him that Madame Gross knows Madame Nalkowska. If she would be so kind—

And when he says this Magdalena Gross stops teasing him. Perhaps—the girl guesses—this is because he looks so scared. Or perhaps it's his almost desperate stubbornness. Gross goes to

the telephone. She speaks with Zofia Nalkowska and tells her about the man. "If I have to read the manuscript of every oddball who comes to Warsaw with a book," Nalkowska says, "I'll have no time for my own writing."

Magdalena Gross asks that she take one quick look at the book. She whispers into the phone, "Do me a favor. Just look at the first page. If you don't like it, tell him and erase the doubt from his heart."

Zofia Nalkowska agrees reluctantly. Magdalena Gross hangs up the phone. "Take a taxi. In half an hour, Madame Nalkowska will see you, for ten minutes."

Schulz hurries out. An hour later, he returns. Without the manuscript. "What did she say?" Magdalena Gross asks.

He says, "Madame Nalkowska asked me to read the first page to her out loud. She listened. Suddenly she stopped me. She asked that I leave her alone with the pages, and that I return here, to the hotel. She said she would be in touch soon."

Magdalena Gross brings him tea, but he can't drink it. They wait in silence. The air in the room grows serious and stifling. The man paces the lobby nervously, back and forth. The girl follows him with her eyes. Years later, after she has grown up, she will leave Poland, go to live in Argentina, and take the name Alicia. She will become a painter there and marry a sculptor, Silvio Giangrande. She will tell this story to a newspaper reporter during a visit to Jerusalem, nearly sixty years after the fact.

The three wait. Every ring of the telephone startles them. Finally, as evening draws near, Zofia Nalkowska calls. She has read only thirty pages, there are things that she is certain she has not understood, but it seems to be a discovery—perhaps the most important discovery in Polish literature in recent years. She herself wishes to have the honor of taking this manuscript to the publisher. The girl looks at the man: he seems about to faint. A chair is brought

to him. He sits down and holds his face in his hands.

Of the many stories, legends, and anecdotes about Bruno Schulz that I have heard over the years, this one especially moves me. Perhaps because of the humble setting of this dazzling debut, or perhaps because it was recounted from the innocent vantage of a young girl, sitting in the corner of the lobby, watching a man who seemed to her as fragile as a child.

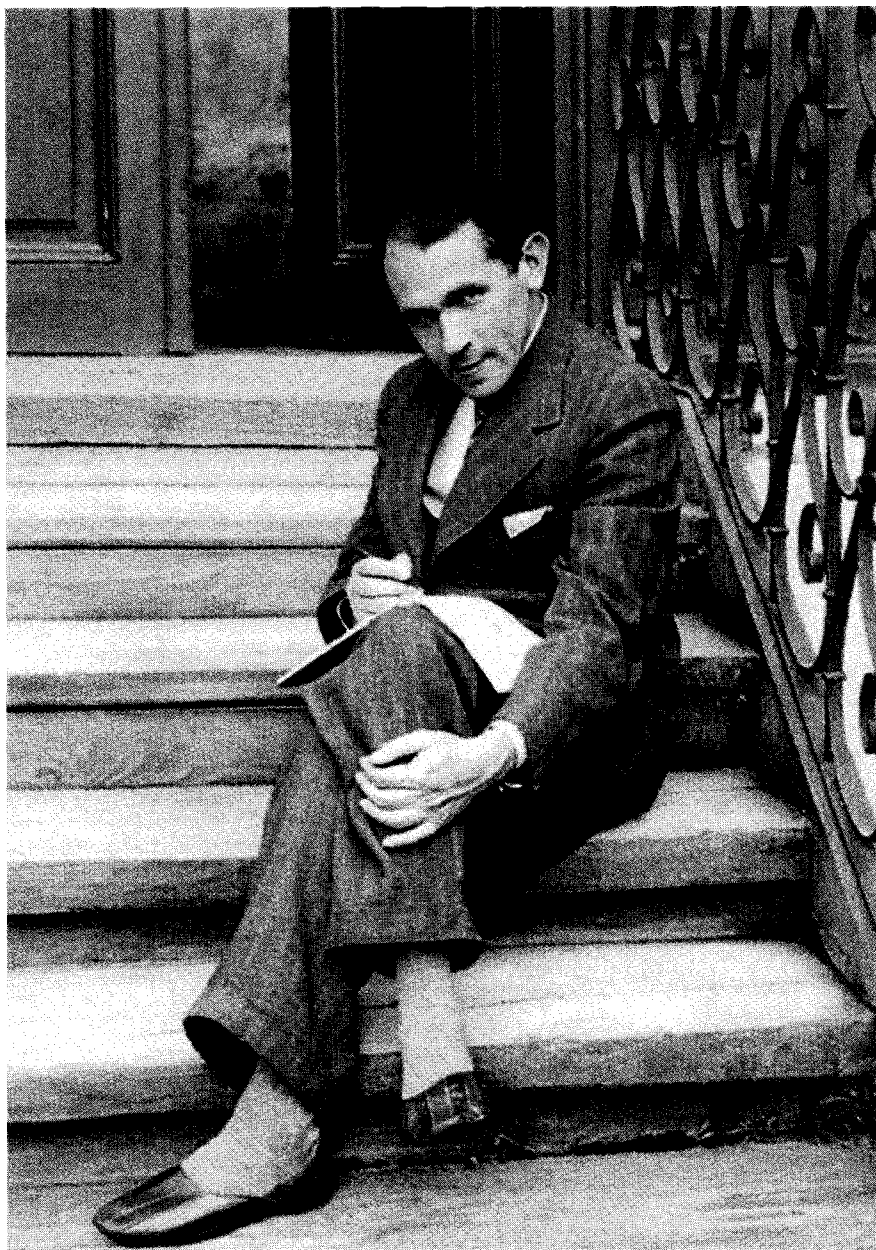
And another story I heard: Once, when Schulz was a boy, on a melancholy evening his mother, Henrietta, walked into his room and found him feeding grains of sugar to the last houseflies to have survived the cold autumn.

"Bruno," she asked, "why are you doing that?"

"So they will have strength for the winter."

Bruno Schulz, a Polish Jewish writer, was born in 1892 in the town of Drohobycz, in Galicia, which was then within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and today is in Ukraine. His oeuvre is small: only two collections of stories survive, and a few dozen essays, articles, and reviews, along with paintings and drawings. But these pieces contain an entire world. His two books—"Cinnamon Shops" (1934; the English translation is titled "The Street of Crocodiles") and "The Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" (1937)—create a fantastic universe, a private mythology of one family, and are written in a language that brims with life, a language that is itself the main character of the stories and is the only dimension in which they could possibly exist. Schulz also worked on a novel called "The Messiah," which was lost during the war. No one knows what was in it. I once met a man to whom Schulz had shown the opening lines. What he read was a description of morning rising over a city. Light growing stronger. Towers and steeples. More than that, he did not see.

On the publication of his first book, Schulz was immediately recognized as a rare talent by the Polish literary establishment. Over the years, he has become a figure of great interest to readers and writers worldwide. Authors such as Philip Roth, Danilo Kiš, Cynthia Ozick, and Nicole Krauss have written about him, made him a character in their books, or reinvented his life story. An aura of wonder and mystery hovers ceaselessly over his



Schulz in 1935: He rarely left his home town, but his works contain an entire universe.

works and his biography. "He was one of those men on whose head God lays His hand while they are asleep so that they get to know what they don't know, so that they are filled with intuitions and conjectures, while the reflections of distant worlds pass across their closed eyelids": so wrote Schulz about Alexander the Great, in his story "Spring" (as translated by Celina Wieniewska). But one could easily say the same of Schulz. And perhaps also of us, his readers, as his stories work their way into our mind.

It seems that everyone who loves Bruno Schulz has his own personal tale of discovery. It happened to me just after I published my first novel, "The Smile of the Lamb." A new writer is sometimes

like a new baby in the family. He arrives from the unknown, and his family has to find a way to connect with him, to make him a little less "dangerous" in his newness and mystery. The relatives lean over the infant's crib, peer at him closely, and say, "Look, look, he has Uncle Jacob's nose! His chin is exactly like Aunt Malka's!" Something similar happens when you first become an author. Everyone rushes to tell you who has influenced you, from whom you have learned, and, of course, from whom you have stolen.

One day, I received a telephone call from a man named Daniel Schilit, a Polish Jew who had come to live in Israel. He had read my book, and he said, "You obviously are greatly influenced by Bruno Schulz."

I was young and polite and didn't argue with him. The truth is that, up to that moment, I had not read a single story by Schulz. But, after the phone call, I thought I should try to find one of his books. And that very evening, at the home of friends, I happened to come across a Hebrew edition of his collected stories. I borrowed it and read it. I read the whole book in several hours. Even today it is hard for me to describe the jolt that ran through me.

When I got to the end of the book, I read the epilogue, by one of Schulz's Hebrew translators, Yoram Bronowski. And there, for the first time, I came upon the story of how Schulz had died: "In the Drohobycz ghetto Schulz had a protector, an S.S. officer who had exploited Schulz to paint murals on the walls of his house. The rival of this S.S. officer shot Schulz in the street in order to provoke the officer. According to rumor, when they met thereafter, one told the other, 'I have killed your Jew,' and received the reply: 'All right, now I will go and kill your Jew.'"

I closed the book. I felt as if I had been bludgeoned. As if I were falling into an abyss where such things were possible.

Not always can a writer pinpoint the moment at which a book sprouted inside him. After all, feelings and thoughts accumulate over a period of years, until they

ripen and burst out in the act of writing. And yet, although for many years I had wanted to write about the Shoah, it was those two sentences, this devastating sample of Nazi syntax and world view—"I have killed your Jew," "All right, now I will go and kill your Jew"—which were the final push, the electric shock that ignited the writing of my novel "See Under: Love."

Schulz's many admirers know the story that I just told about the circumstances of his death. The Polish author and poet Jerzy Ficowski, one of the greatest scholars of Schulz's life and work, recounts in his book "Regions of the Great Heresy" how, a short time before the Black Thursday massacre in Drohobycz, in 1942, the Gestapo officer Felix Landau shot a Jewish dentist named Löw, who had been under the "protection" of another Gestapo officer, Karl Günther. There had been a grudge between Landau and Günther for some time, and the murder incited Günther to take revenge. Proclaiming his intentions, he went looking for Schulz, a Jew who had been under Landau's protection. Taking advantage of the Black Thursday *Aktion*, he shot Schulz at the corner of Czacki and Mickiewicz Streets. "According to accounts of several Drohobycz residents," Ficowski writes, "when meeting Lan-

dau, Günther announced triumphantly: 'You killed my Jew—I killed yours.'"

This is the canonical version of the story. But there are some who believe that although Schulz was indeed killed in the Drohobycz ghetto, that horrible exchange was fabricated, a legend. The debate about Schulz's death has endured for decades. Apparently, there is no way to settle the issue—nor do I expect that other evidence, such as the testimony that I am about to report, will lay the matter to rest.

From the time I knew that I was going to be a writer, I also knew that I would write about the Shoah. And, as I grew older, I became even more convinced that I would not truly be able to understand my life in Israel, as a person, as a father, a writer, an Israeli, a Jew, until I understood the life that I *hadn't* lived—in the time of the Shoah, in the space of the Shoah. I wanted to find out what there was in me that I could have used to oppose the Nazis' attempt at erasure. How would I have preserved my human spark within a reality that was wholly devised to extinguish it?

Today, I can say that Schulz's writing showed me a way to write about the Shoah, and, in a sense, also a way to live after the Shoah. Sometimes there are such moments of grace: you open a book by an author you don't know, and suddenly you feel yourself passing through a magnetic field that sends you in a new direction, setting off eddies that you'd barely sensed before and could not name. I read Schulz's stories and felt the gush of life. On every page, life was raging, exploding with vitality, suddenly worthy of its name; it was taking place on all layers of consciousness and subconsciousness, in dreams, in illusions, and in nightmares. I felt the stories' ability to revive me, to carry me beyond the paralysis and despair that inevitably gripped me whenever I thought about the Holocaust or came into contact with the aspects of human nature which had ultimately allowed it to happen.

In his story "Tailors' Dummies," Schulz wrote about his father, a cloth merchant:

It is worth noting how, in contact with that strange man, all things reverted, as it were, to the roots of their existence, rebuilt their outward appearance anew from their



P. BYRNE.

metaphysical core, returned to the primary idea, in order to betray it at some point and to turn into the doubtful, risky and equivocal regions which we shall call for short the Regions of the Great Heresy.

There is no more precise description of Schulz's writing itself, of his incessant search for the "metaphysical core" of things, but also of his brave capacity to change his point of view in an instant, and to turn, at the very last second, in the most ironic and ambiguous way, to the Regions of the Great Heresy.

This is the strength of this writer, who has no illusions about the arbitrary, chaotic, and random nature of life yet is nonetheless determined to force life—existence both indefinite and indifferent—to surrender, to open itself wide and expose the kernel of meaning hidden in its depths. I would even add: the kernel of *humanity*.

But although Schulz is a big believer in some significance or meaning or law that generates and regulates everything in the world—people, animals, plants, even inanimate objects, to which he often also grants, with a certain smile, souls and desires—he is still able to uproot himself suddenly from this faith and deny it absolutely, with a sort of bottomless, demonic despair, which only intensifies our sense of his profound loneliness and our intuition that, for this man, there was no consolation in the world.

In an old-age home in the southern Israeli city of Beersheba, in the early summer of 2008, I met Ze'ev Fleischer. A short man, slight and bald, with huge eyeglasses, he was, at eighty-three, sharp-minded, ironic, and disillusioned, and his humor was seasoned with bitterness. Most of all, he was self-effacing, never missing an opportunity to diminish or make fun of himself. He liked to write "satirical songs and fleeting aphorisms," and had collected his works in a book, entitled "Above My Sailboats." In his youth, for two years, from 1939 to 1941, Fleischer had been a pupil of Bruno Schulz's at the Sternbach Gymnasium, a private high school for Jews, in Drohobycz. It was situated on Szaszkiewicz Street, not far from the city center.

"Officially, Schulz was a teacher of arts and crafts," Fleischer told me. "He was very shy and bottled up. His stock was very low, in the eyes of others, of

strangers. Why? Because a man, after all, has to earn money! And someone like Schulz, who wrote 'nonsense,' counted for nothing. At most they regarded him as human sawdust. . . . His friends, mostly literary people, arranged a job for him at the Gymnasium. They, the friends, saw his talent and his genius—this was after the publication of his books. They saw that he had no chance of surviving in a climate that valued only money, and they decided to help him.

"He was supposed to teach us drawing and handicrafts, but he understood very quickly that as an art teacher he would get no respect from the students. In general, he was one of those people who kind of apologize for their very existence, so you can only imagine what went on during his lessons. In Schulz's class, there were mainly kids who were disciplinary problems, and he knew he would be fresh meat for them and their ridicule, and I think he realized very fast that he could save himself only if he did something different. So he had this brilliant idea—he would tell us stories. Extemporaneous stories, on the spot, and that's what he did, and it was like he was painting with words. He told stories, and we listened—even the wildest animals listened."

Fleischer laughed. "He did nearly nothing else. I don't think he drew one line on the blackboard the whole year. . . . But he told stories. He would come into the classroom, sit down, then suddenly stand up and start walking around, talking, with hand gestures, with that voice of his, and the wildest kids sat there enchanted."

I asked what kind of voice Schulz had.

"When he spoke softly, he would dominate. There were no imperatives in his voice. And there was always this feeling that he himself was hearing—how do I put it?—that this was a kind of music for him. He spoke in a monotone, but colorfully. He didn't care about commas or question marks. But he was very impressive. His quiet was very impressive. His music was in the quiet. And we, the students, adjusted ourselves to this quiet. Apparently, he didn't know how to talk loud.

"And he was afraid of us," Fleischer added. "He was always in a sort of defensive position. . . . Because most of the stu-

dents, they saw him as a *lemech*, a nebbish, but, when he told stories, that shut them up. They didn't understand much, but they *felt* him. I don't know if he ever wrote any of those stories down. I can't recall them specifically. But I remember that they were stories not from this world—they were mystical. After the war, I called up a friend who had studied with me there in the Gymnasium, and he didn't remember Schulz at all. But on me Schulz made an impression—I guess because of certain feelings of inferiority, which I still have to this day, and he, Schulz, also had, and this was a connection between us.

"I also knew Schulz because he lived across from my aunt on Bednarska Street," Fleischer went on. "He was my father's age. Older than me by thirty-three years. When he was our teacher, I couldn't control myself, and I would run after him at the end of the lesson: 'Professor!'—that's what we called all our teachers—and I would ask him what he had meant in a story he'd told us, and he would stop and talk to me, talk to me like we were equals. Even though they were already calling him one of the giants of Polish literature. His lack of self-confidence was so obvious. He would walk into class: 'Sorry I came,' 'Sorry I'm breathing,' a character like that, walking bent over, there was always that stooped element in him.

"His sense of humor was laughing at himself. . . . When he would start to tell a story, there would be a moment when he wasn't sure of himself, always at the beginning, but as soon as he started to spin out the story, and saw that the class was quieting down, suddenly there would be this smile on his face, half ironic. Now they're listening, they're sitting down, nobody is moving. And then this smile of his, it was . . . like he was celebrating his temporary victory, but at the same time he was also kind of laughing at himself."

In my book "See Under: Love," Bruno Schulz appears both as himself and as a fictional character. In his fictional guise, I smuggled him out of wartime Drohobycz, under the noses of the literary scholars and the historians, to the pier in Danzig, where he jumped into the water and joined a school of salmon.

Why salmon?

Perhaps because salmon have always seemed to me the living incarnation of a journey. They are born in freshwater

rivers or lakes. They swim there for a while, and then head for salt water. In the sea, they travel in huge schools for thousands of miles, until they sense some inner signal, and the school reverses direction and begins to return home, to the place where its members were hatched. Again the salmon swim thousands of miles. Along the way, they are preyed upon by other fish, by eagles and bears. In dwindling numbers, they scoot upriver and leap against the current, through waterfalls twenty or thirty feet long, until the few that remain reach the exact spot where they were spawned, and lay their eggs. When the babies hatch, they swim over the dead bodies of their parents. Only a few adult salmon survive to perform the journey a second time.

When I first heard about the life cycle of salmon, I felt that there was something very Jewish about it: that inner signal which suddenly resonates in the consciousness of the fish, bidding them to return to the place where they were born, the place where they were formed as a group. (There may also be something very Jewish in the urge to *leave* that homeland and wander all over the world—that eternal journey.)

But there was something else as well that drove me to choose salmon, something deeply connected with the writings of Bruno Schulz. Reading his works made me realize that, in our day-to-day routines, we feel our lives most when they are running out: as we age, as we lose our physical abilities, our health, and, of course, family members and friends who are important to us. Then we pause for a moment, sink into ourselves, and feel: here was something, and now it is gone. It will not return. And it may be that we understand it, truly and deeply, only when it is lost. But when we read Schulz, page by page, we sense the words returning to their source, to the strongest and most authentic pulse of the life within them. Suddenly we want more. Suddenly we know that it is possible to want more, that life is greater than what grows dim with us and steadily fades away.

When I wrote the “Bruno” chapter of my book, and described an imaginary scenario in which Bruno flees the failure of civilization, the perfidious language of humans, and joins a school of salmon, I

felt that I was very close to touching the root of life itself, the primal, naked impulse of life, which salmon seem to sketch in their long journey, and which the real Bruno Schulz wrote about in his books, and for which he yearned in every one of his stories: the longed-for realm that he called the Age of Genius. The Age of Genius was for Schulz an age driven by the faith that life could be created over and over again through the power of imagination and passion and love, the faith that despair had not yet overruled any of these forces, that we had not yet been eaten away by our own cynicism and nihilism. The Age of Genius was for Schulz a period of perfect childhood, feral and filled with light, which even if it lasted for only a brief moment in a person’s life would be missed for the rest of his years.

“Did the Age of Genius ever occur?” Schulz asks, and we, his readers, ask along with him. Was there ever really an age of sublime inspiration, when man could return to his childhood? When *mankind* could return to its childhood? An age when a primeval river of life, of vitality, of creativity, gloriously raged? An age when essences had not frozen into forms, when everything was still possible and plentiful and nascent?

Did the Age of Genius ever occur? Schulz wonders. And, if it did, would we recognize it, answer its secret call? Would we dare to relinquish the elaborate defense mechanisms that we have constructed against the antediluvian wildness and volcanic abundance of such an age, defenses that have, bit by bit, become our prison?

A few years after Schulz wrote that line came an age that was the utter opposite. An age of slaughter. Of massive, faceless destruction. And yet to that terrifying call many responded, so many, with depressing eagerness.

In “See Under: Love,” I struggled to bring to life, if only for a few pages, the Age of Genius, as Schulz had sug-

gested it in his writings. I wrote about an age in which every person is a creator, an artist, and each human life is unique and treasured. An age in which we adults feel unbearable pain over our fossilized childhoods, and a sudden urge to dissolve the crust that has congealed around us. An age in which everyone understands that killing a person destroys a singular work of art, which can never be replicated. An age in which it is no longer possible to think in a way that will produce such sentences as “I have killed your Jew”; “Now I will go and kill your Jew.”

Stalin once said, “One death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic.” When I read the stories of Bruno Schulz, I can feel in them—and in myself—the ceaseless pounding of an impulse to defy that statement, an impulse to *rescue* the life of the individual, his only, precious, tragic life, from that “statistic.”

And also, of course—need one say this at all?—the urge to rescue, to redeem, the life and death of Schulz himself.

We owe the sole eyewitness account of Schulz’s murder in the ghetto of Drohobycz on November 19, 1942, to a fellow-townsmen, Izydor Friedman, who survived this particular butchery,” Jerzy Ficowski writes, in his book “Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz,” which appeared in English in 1988. Ficowski quotes Friedman, who escaped the Nazi horrors thanks to forged documents: “I was a friend of his before the war and remained in close contact with him to the day of his death in the Drohobycz ghetto. As a Jew, I was assigned by the Drohobycz *Judenrat* to work in a library under Gestapo authority, and so was Schulz. This was a depository made up of all public and the major private libraries. . . . Its core collection was that of the Jesuits of Chyrow. It comprised circa 100,000 volumes, which were to be catalogued or committed to destruction by Schulz and myself. This assignment lasted several months, was congenial and full of interest to us, and was paradise by comparison with the assignments drawn by other Jews.”

Friedman’s meaning is perfectly clear, of course, but it is hard for me to believe that Schulz was indifferent to the significance of the job that had been imposed on him, to the cruel irony that



CRUSH

Maybe my limbs are made
mostly for decoration,
like the way I feel about
persimmons. You can't
really eat them. Or you
wouldn't want to. If you grab
the soft skin with your fist
it somehow feels funny,
like you've been here
before and uncomfortable,
too, like you'd rather
squish it between your teeth
impatiently, before spitting
the soft parts back up
to linger on the tongue like
burnt sugar or guilt.
For starters, it was all
an accident, you cut
the right branch
and a sort of light
woke up underneath,
and the inedible fruit
grew dark and needy.
Think crucial hanging.
Think crayon orange.
There is one low, leaning
heart-shaped globe left
and dearest, can you
tell, I am trying
to love you less.

—Ada Limón

he was the man sentenced to decide which books would be saved and which would be destroyed.

Friedman continues, "We spent long hours in conversation. Schulz informed me at the time that he had deposited all his papers, notes, and correspondence files with a Catholic outside the ghetto. Unfortunately he did not give me the person's name, or possibly I forgot it. We also discussed the possibility of Schulz's escaping to Warsaw. Friends . . . had sent him a [false] identity card from Warsaw. I provided him with currency and dollars, but he kept putting off the departure day. He could not summon up the courage and meant to wait until I received 'Aryan' papers.

"On a date I don't recall, in 1942, known as Black Thursday in Drohobycz, the Gestapo carried out a massacre in the

ghetto. We happened to be in the ghetto to buy food. . . . When we heard shooting and saw Jews run for their lives, we too took to flight. Schulz, physically the weaker, was caught by a Gestapo agent called Günther, who stopped him, put a revolver to his head, and fired twice.

"During the night, I found his body, searched his pockets, and gave his documents and some notes I found there to his nephew Hoffman—who lost his life a month later. Toward morning, I buried him in the Jewish cemetery. I was unable to identify his grave site after the liberation of Drohobycz in 1944." (In his book "Drohobycz, Drohobycz," the Polish Jewish writer Henryk Grynberg points out that it would have been difficult for Friedman to single-handedly bury Schulz's body.)

According to Ficowski, Friedman's is

the only eyewitness testimony of the murder of Schulz available. I thought so, too, until, in the middle of the conversation at the old-age home in Beersheba, Ze'ev Fleischer told me the following:

"In '42 there was an *Aktion* that lasted a full month. Generally, an *Aktion* would go on for a day or two. The Germans would catch their quota of Jews, and it was over. But that time, four weeks. At night it was quiet, and in the daytime they went hunting. I was working then at forced labor, in the oil refineries. At 5 A.M. everyone had to show up in front of his house, and from there we went to work until seven at night. At that time we had agreed with my mother that she would go into hiding at a place where my uncle worked as a pharmacist.

"And so from the day the *Aktion* started I didn't see her. I lost contact with her, and I went to look for her. I was very tied to her, and I decided, against all logic, somehow to get to the place where I thought I would find her. And on the way I saw how groups of Germans would see here and there a Jew, or some Jews, and shoot them. This wasn't an *Aktion* where they rounded up Jews to be sent away. This was murder on the spot. They simply looked for any Jew, anywhere, and shot him. Look—today, they call us heroes. Some heroes! We were mice, most of us. We hid in our holes.

"Drohobycz is a small town, and between the houses, also inside the houses, the hunting went on, and on the way I saw groups of Germans, and with every group there was also one Jew, who worked in the *Ordnungsdienst*, which was sort of an auxiliary force to preserve order, and their people were armed with clubs, not guns.

"And suddenly I heard shots. I stood by a wall and waited for it to be over. And then I saw a group of Jews, two or three Jews, walking past a house, this was on Czacki Street, and some Germans and Ukrainians with guns were also there, and they shot at the Jews, and the Jews fell down.

"I waited for the Germans to go away, and then I walked past the dead people. There were dead bodies everywhere. Dead people in the street was an everyday thing. If you saw the dead body of a cat in the street it would have made a bigger impression. I didn't notice that anything special had happened,

and I also didn't know who they were. I almost walked right past that one dead man, but when I saw the bread I drew closer.

"I saw, from one of the bodies lying on the sidewalk, something like a piece of bread. It was sticking out there, from the pocket of his trenchcoat. I went over to this dead man, and I guess I wanted to take his bread. And the dead man turned over. I turned him over, and the way I turned him he was facing me, and I look and see that it's Schulz. It was Schulz's face."

Fleischer stopped, folded his hands on his head, took a few deep breaths.

"And then what did you do?" I asked.

"I can't tell you . . . it was something shocking, so much that I'm not sure that . . . what did I do? My instinct was to take the bread and run away. And it seems I didn't do that. It seems I didn't do it. Look, a person who doesn't eat—and we, after all, didn't eat, we ate

inedible things, we ate soup that was mostly water with some grass or something. . . . And here I see, in his coat—it looked like, like a serious piece of bread. And I went over to this dead man, and apparently I wanted to take the bread from him. I wanted to pull out the bread and go. I even thought, I'll come to Imma with bread, how happy she will be, but I . . . you know, I can't . . . I don't know what I did with that bread. I think I left it. Yes. I left because I saw his face, with blood here and here." Fleischer pointed to his forehead, his eyes, covered his whole face with his hand. "I kept running, and by the end of the day I found my mother."

"Did you recognize Schulz immediately, the moment you saw his face?"

"Sure. First of all, he had a very typical face. He had this nose . . . he looked a little like a mouse. But he had a high forehead, and this I always would notice because my parents would say that a person

with a high forehead was very smart."

"Do you remember what you felt when you saw that the dead man was Bruno Schulz?"

"I felt a chill and I felt afraid. . . . You understand by now that he was more than a teacher for me. I felt a special kind of connection with him; he was a spiritual relative in certain respects. I also felt that my personality was a little similar to his . . . hesitant, bashful, my lack of self-confidence. When they all laughed at him, I felt so sorry for him. I completely identified with him. And I always admired him, for the way he would talk and we would see a picture. We could smell the things he described. I remember how, for example, he described the smell of cinnamon, which was dominant in the commercial area of Drohobycz, and I, all my life, never could stand the smell of cinnamon, but only when he described it I loved it. . . . And suddenly I see him dead. I was about seventeen at the time, and I had already seen many dead, but suddenly—*him*."

I asked Fleischer if he knew the story of Schulz's murder.

"Of course. It was a big rivalry between two of them. Landau was his patron, and there's a version that's hard for me to accept—those who say Günther killed him. It's hard for me to accept, you know why? Because Günther was an officer in the Gestapo. So I can't quite imagine Günther running in the street to kill him. He could have killed him other ways. No, regarding this question I have no idea. I have no answer till this day. There's a million stories I heard."

In the days following my meeting with Fleischer, I found myself returning in my mind, again and again, to the picture of the boy leaning over the body of his beloved teacher on the street, and the bread peeking from the dead man's jacket pocket. Something in the way Fleischer had spoken about the event wouldn't leave me alone. I asked him if he would agree to tell me one more time the story of those moments. To my surprise, he readily repeated for me what he remembered.

"He, the dead man, lay on his side in a way that you couldn't see his face. He lay bent over like this—" Fleischer demonstrated with his body, and



"I miss the palm tree, too, but at least we can have a refrigerator."

INSIGHTS ON THE ECONOMY

Answers from today's leading financial voices

Tyler Cowen, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, and Mark E. Johannessen, CFP®

The economy, national and global security, energy, healthcare, education—the world is at a critical juncture, and a new administration faces unprecedented challenges. Here, a gathering of prominent voices from a cross-section of disciplines offer their insights about a new course toward financial well-being.

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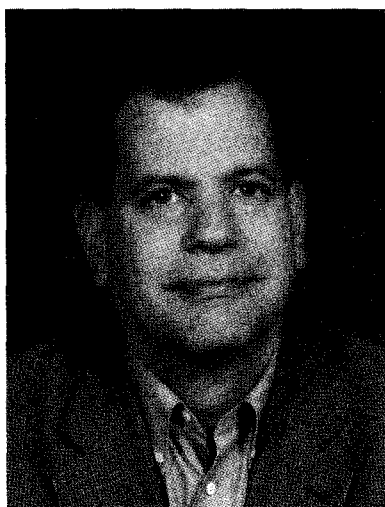
TYLER COWEN

Q: What are the telltale indicators and signs that the economy is coming back, including spending and unemployment levels?

A: Most of all, we are seeing the revitalization of credit markets. Banks are selling equity shares again, the junk bond market is up and running, and many credit constraints are easing. That's not identical with an economic recovery but it is a prerequisite for recovery. People aren't talking about "end of the world" scenarios anymore and that is a big reason why. So far, the major economic indicators are pointing toward stabilization.

Unemployment is usually one of the last variables to recover in a business cycle. That's bad for the people who are out of work, but in terms of investing, the stock market recovers well before the labor market does. There is no reason why investors should wait for labor market recovery, and in fact if you do, you will probably end up behind the curve.

Q: What are the risks of focusing on short-term stability in a tough economy rather than maintaining a long-term outlook? **A:** Most people and most investors should have a long-term outlook. We're biologically programmed, however, to care a great deal about the short run. Human beings evolved in a setting where the next meal was always at risk. It's hard to rise above those daily emotional pressures. Overall, many people would be well advised, when it comes to investing, to ignore short-run headlines and focus on the longer-term questions of how old they are, how much risk they can afford to take, and how much discipline they have to commit to longer-term investing.



Q: What is the importance of asset allocation and rebalancing a portfolio over the long term?

A: As you age, put a lower proportion of your portfolio into relatively risky equities. Most people should become more risk-averse with age as their time horizons shorten. When you are younger, that is the time to take risks.

Q: What types of investments are available right now that will be beneficial in the long term?

A: The most important investment advice is to diversify. Don't count on being able to beat the market as a whole with a few brilliant picks. It is always possible to diversify, and indeed, it is becoming easier all the time.

Q: What are some tips for psychologically coping with financial losses?

A: Don't check your portfolio too often. Whether the market is doing well or not, focus on the good things in your life. The very fact that you are able

to make financial investments means that, in the broader sweep of human history, you are in the top one per cent in terms of comfort and standard of living. Don't forget that. People who have nothing also have no more financial losses to worry about. That's not a position you ever wish to be in.

Q: Where can clients learn more about planning and investing in these times?

A: I'm an advocate of economics and financial blogs as a good means of following the economy, and of course I write a blog myself (marginalrevolution.com). I don't recommend using blogs as a means of picking up "stock tips," but if you wish to understand "the big picture"—most of all, economic policy—blogs are often more useful than financial journalism of the traditional sort. I'm also a big advocate of common sense: diversify, and avoid hubris.

Q: What tips can be given to advisors and clients on how to deal with information overload about the economy and synthesize information to make decisions?

A: As I've stressed in my new

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book, "Create Your Own Prosperity," there is no such thing as overload—there are only poor informational filters. So get better filters, and for that I would say start by following two or three high-quality bloggers. Decide what your quality sources are and commit to them.

Overall, the most important information is about yourself and your financial position. If you're trying to cull through everything that has been written about a company, your approach to investing is probably mistaken (unless you are an insider and very well informed). If you are finding that information overload is a problem, you probably should rethink what you are doing more generally. Focus on basic principles—again, going back to your personal situation in life, your overall portfolio position, and your tolerance for risk.

Q: If people are afraid to invest, or don't have money, how can they plan for their futures?

A: Everyone is investing all the time, whether they like it or not. They are investing their human capital, their time, their energy, and so on. There is no such thing as not investing. We should consider that a liberating thought. Simply "sitting put" can be a risky thing to do. So yes, you should be cautious about the risks you take, but don't think you have any completely safe options. You don't, and that is because the world itself is changing rapidly. You need to adapt to that fact and that will mean taking some chances.

Tyler Cowen is the Holbert C. Harris Professor of Economics at George Mason University and the author of "Create Your Own Prosperity: The Path to Prosperity in a Disordered World" to be published on July 9th. He co-writes a blog at marginalrevolution.com.

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN

Q: Is long-term financial planning possible during uncertain economic times? A: Current economic conditions have ravaged a broad cross-section of Americans, their budgets, and their financial plans. So it is not surprising that many are reconsidering their financial futures. Indeed, there is a case to be made that there has never been a more important time to undertake long-term planning.

Why? First, let us remember that long-run plan-

ning is an integral part of any household. Whether it is a formal process—sitting down with a financial planner—or less so—having a glass of wine and worrying about retirement—every family has to have a rough sketch of how to get from "here" (current jobs, accumulated savings, etc.) to "there" (college for kids, retirement savings), and the other demands for wealth accumulation. So this is nothing new. But the setting might feel new.

Q: How is the current financial downturn different from those in previous years? A: This recession is quite ordinary in many respects. There have been financial crises before. The world has seen this pattern in the Nordic countries, in Japan, and in the savings

and loan crisis of the nineteen-eighties in the United States. The recession is a broad-based and severe contraction in output, income, and employment. But this also occurred in the downturns in 1974-75 and 1980-82. The current situation, however, is unique in that many households arrived at the threshold of the crisis in an unprecedented state of indebtedness, placing a premium on putting together a path to greater net worth.

And this crisis is dominated by a residential real estate bubble, an asset that has traditionally been the pathway to retirement savings

but that is now suspect. Finally, in addition to the need to reassess housing and get debt under control, there is a widespread perception that global financial markets are undertaking a fundamental reassessment of risks. Individuals and families seeking to navigate alternative instruments and plan their financial futures do so in a challenging environment.

Q: Going forward, should financial plans take into account future downturns? A: Indeed, one of the great lessons is that recessions are real, they can hit even a sophisticated and advanced economy like that of the United States, and that families should incorporate some acknowledgment of this possibility into their financial plans. Certainly, a significant part of the duress felt by Americans is due to the fact that they could not envision such a sharp downturn. For those from their twenties to their fifties, this is an important lesson: it could happen again in their lifetime.

Despite the depth and stress of the recession, it is important to plan for the recovery. American households will need sound plans to rebuild their net worth and prepare for retirement. They will be operating in an environment where risks are priced very differently than in years past. They will need to make decisions regarding new government programs in college education, housing, and health



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insurance. And they are facing an environment in which the financial industry has been publicly discredited.

Q: How can financial advisors regain their clients' confidence in planning? A: The reality is that the vast majority of financial institutions are sound and the vast majority of financial products are sensible additions to a savings portfolio. And there will be no substitute for good information and advice. Financial planners can regain the trust of American families by being open and transparent regarding their track records and the reasons for their advice. They should also clearly identify the risks that individuals will face.

Q: What are the components of a good financial plan? A: Americans early in their careers must make the most important first step: start saving. By making regular contributions to a defined-contribution saving vehicle (IRA, 401(k), and so forth), they will greatly improve their futures. At that stage in their life cycle, a well-diversified equity portfolio will likely remain a pillar of financial planning. As time progresses, additional financial instruments such as life insurance can be used to address specific risks.

For those close to retirement at present, the trauma of the financial crisis is felt most deeply. In many respects, there will be little that can substitute for time and the recovery in basic asset values it will bring. However, a characteristic of the recent past—the “search for yield”—carried unwarranted risks that should be avoided in the next few years.

This era is characterized by the simultaneous need for both a survival plan and a long-term strategy. Good long-term planning has always been a valuable practice. Learning to navigate the shifting financial landscape will be a key element of the planning process.

Douglas Holtz-Eakin is the president of DHE Consulting, L.L.C. He was the director of domestic and economic policy for John McCain's 2008 Presidential campaign. Prior to that, he served as the director of the Congressional Budget Office from 2003 to 2005, and was the chief economist for the President's Council of Economic Advisers under George W. Bush from 2001 to 2002.

MARK E. JOHANNESSEN, CFP®

Q: What tips can advisors give to their clients on how to weather the storm? A: The challenge in providing tips for clients in the current financial climate is to recognize that each client comes to us with their own needs, wants, hopes, dreams, and fears. Often, this can be difficult, because most advisors are working with clients who represent as many as four generations and there are many implications for the advice and recommendations that are given. The advice that would be appropriate for the baby boomers may not be appropriate for millennials.

This crisis has caused people to be confused about their well-being, particularly because the root cause (when taking greed out of the picture) was financial instruments too complex for most people to comprehend. The job of the advisor is to help guide the client, using stories that make the complex issues more simple and easy to understand.

Q: How should financial advisors counsel the “Greatest Generation?” A: Help these clients of the World War II generation recognize their sources of income, and to understand the changes that may have occurred as a result of changing annuity payments, dividend reductions, and reduced interest paid on certificates of deposit and Treasury bonds. The perception of most in this generation is that they are in deep trouble.

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Helping this group understand the viability of their income stream is probably one of the most important things the advisor can do. (Based on what we know today, how much money will they expect to earn from all sources? Based on what we know today how much can they spend each month—annualize?)

Q: What should baby boomers do? A: The cold, hard fact is that most baby boomers were ill-prepared for retirement before the current financial crisis. This group would benefit most from a relationship with a financial planning professional (preferably a Certified Financial Planner™—or CFP® practitioner). Clients who have been through the financial planning process should have their plans updated, reviewing at least the retirement plans in the current economic climate. Clients who have never been through this process should submit to it, recognizing that it will help them gain control and provide them with a road map to reach their goals.

Q: How should millennials and Gen Xers approach long-term planning now? A: These groups stand to gain the most from the current financial crisis, yet they may also be the ones least likely to take advantage.

Studies show that these groups generally are better savers than baby boomers. Many in this group also have expressed frustration toward boomers because everything has been more expensive as a result. The current downturn has, in many ways, turned back the clock on the valuations of investment and real estate assets. In addition, low interest rates are making it easier to buy those lower-cost homes, and the government has provided tax incentives for first-time buyers, to boot.

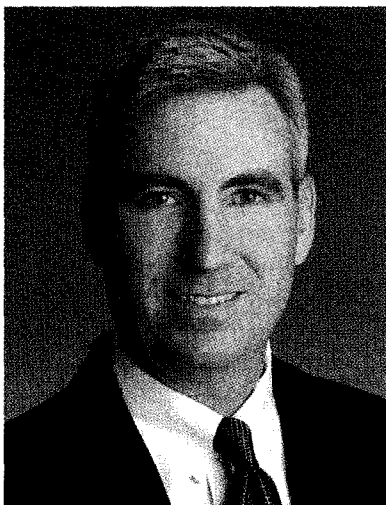
Many financial advisors have expressed concern that this particular group, having been investors for the last ten or so years, may be turned off by the volatility and poor performance of the investment markets. Some fear that a generation of investors may have been lost.

I would say that basic financial planning for this group is crucial right now. Cash-flow planning and debt management, building a safety cushion of six months in case of unexpected job loss, and taking advantage of the government tax breaks available are just a few options to consider. They should use this time to clarify financial goals and begin to implement their plans.

Q: Many consumers say they only trust themselves right now for retirement planning. Why is it crucial to trust financial advisors once again?

A: For those who have lost the faith, I would submit the following hypothetical situation: You are a person of good health who routinely goes to the doctor for annual physicals, and, after several years of stellar health, the next checkup finds you have developed a form of cancer. If treated, it would be manageable, but if left untreated it would kill you. Because of this new diagnosis, would you suddenly lose faith in the doctor who had been giving you a clean bill of health all those years? Or would you work with that doctor to find the best care possible, given your condition?

Trusting yourself with your finances right now will not kill you, but could possibly entail a misdiagnosis of your financial condition and lead to hardship in later years. It is critically important to seek advice from a competent and ethical financial planner, someone who puts your best interests first. If you are not receiving that from your current advisor, look for someone who can provide it for you. You need someone who is able to clearly communicate a strategy going forward, someone who is authentic, genuine, and for whom your deepest values resonate. These are the keys to building trusting relationships that clients need and deserve right now.



Mark Johannessen, CFP® is a managing director and one of the founding professionals of Harris SBSB. He specializes in retirement planning and asset management. Johannessen serves as Chairman of the Board for the Financial Planning Association (FPA), and was the 2005 recipient of the Financial Planner of the Year Award for the FPA-National Capital Chapter.

IN SUMMARY

At a time when the economic landscape is shifting in unexpected ways, the experts agree: a long-term outlook is essential for financial well-being. Also essential is financial advice tailored to your needs and goals. Lincoln Financial wants to help you identify the strategies that will both secure your future and offer financial health right now. **Visit LincolnFinancial.com to find out more.**

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I thought of Bruno Schulz lying stooped over, just as he was in life. "And I also noticed that he had these shoes, *tenisowki*, tennis shoes . . ."

Fleischer spoke again about the bread. "It was a loaf of bread. Like a brick . . . more mud than bread. Half of it was sawdust. It was like a piece of mud they used to bake then. If I stuck in a finger, it would go in like it was modelling clay."

And what happened then? I asked.

"What happened? . . . I took it. Maybe I took a bite of it? No. No. . . . Anyway, I can't tell you clearly what exactly happened with that bread."

I told him that what he'd faced at that moment seemed to me more terrible than any possible answer to the question of whether he took or didn't take the bread; I also said I was sure that Schulz would have been happy to know that it was his student who had taken his bread.

Fleischer nodded, but couldn't agree with me wholeheartedly. Then he said, "I think I ate. Very little. Two or three bites. Not more. Then it broke in half in my hand. I wanted to run away." I asked if he had also taken some of the bread to his mother, and he said that he didn't remember. "Apparently, yes. Maybe not. . . . But even if I had brought it to her I wouldn't have told her from where. At that time we didn't talk much."

I said to Fleischer that I wanted with all my heart to believe that he had indeed eaten the bread of Bruno Schulz, that there had been such a moment between them. He shrugged and said, "I don't know. I'm not sure. It was one of those things that are impossible to remember." And he sighed. "It was horrible, the whole thing, from beginning to end, and in those days I thought mostly about my mother and my father and about myself. Only afterward it came back to me. After the war. I dreamed a series of dreams, for a year or two, about friends of mine walking in a line and not wanting to talk to me. Turning their backs on me because I stayed alive and didn't help them. I felt that this was my sin. I still feel that way now."

Fleischer met Jerzy Ficowski, the biographer of Bruno Schulz, in 2003, in Poland, when they were interviewed for a television documentary. He told Ficowski his story but asked that it not be

published, lest the myth of Schulz's death be spoiled. Ficowski replied that Fleischer could think it over, and then talk to him again. But they didn't meet again, and Ficowski died in 2006. "My thinking about myths has changed since then," Fleischer told me. "Again and again I discover myths that were broken and ideals that were shattered. The story must be told."

The description of Schulz's murder as reported by his friend Izydor Friedman is different, of course, from Fleischer's description. I do not know which of the two is accurate, and it is possible that the definitive facts will never be confirmed. From where Fleischer stood during the shooting he likely wouldn't have seen exactly what was happening, and he himself says that he was not paying special attention at the moment of the killing. There is no reason to doubt his word about what he went through when he found himself crouching over the dead body of his teacher.

Fleischer's testimony provides us with the story of one more human contact with Bruno Schulz, after his death and before his body was buried. Contact that for a moment redeemed him from the anonymity of the murder, and also from that vile "statistic," and gave him back his name, his face, and his uniqueness. This brief contact echoed everything that had been good and nourishing and generous in him toward his young student. This contact "allowed" Bruno Schulz to perform one more act of grace, even after his death.

In recent years, I've been going back, more or less once a year, to the stories of Bruno Schulz. For me it's a sort of annual tune-up, a strengthening of the antibodies against the temptations of apathy and withdrawal. Every time I open his books, I am amazed anew to discover how this writer, a single human being who rarely left his home town, created for us an entire world, an alternate dimension of reality, and how he continues even now, so many years after his death, to feed us grains of sugar—and crumbs of bread—so that we may somehow make it through the cold, endless winter. ♦

(Translated, from the Hebrew,
by Stuart Schoffman.)

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GOOD NEIGHBORS

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN



Walter and Patty Berglund were the young pioneers of Ramsey Hill—the first college grads to buy a house on Barrier Street since the old heart of St. Paul had fallen on hard times three decades earlier. The Berglunds paid nothing for their Victorian and then killed themselves for ten years renovating it. Early on, some very determined person torched their garage and twice broke into their car before they got the garage rebuilt. Sunburned bikers descended on the vacant lot across the alley to drink Schlitz and grill knockwurst and rev engines at small hours until Patty went outside in sweatclothes and said, “Hey, you guys, you know what?” Patty frightened nobody, but she’d been a standout athlete in high school and college and possessed a jock sort of fearlessness. From her first day in the neighborhood, she was helplessly conspicuous. Tall, ponytailed, absurdly young, pushing a stroller past stripped cars and broken beer bottles and barfed-upon old snow, she might have been carrying all the hours of her day in the string bags that hung from her stroller. Behind her you could see the baby-encumbered preparations for a morning of baby-encumbered errands; ahead of her, an afternoon of public radio, “The Silver Palate Cookbook,” cloth diapers, drywall compound, and latex paint, and then “Goodnight Moon,” then Zinfandel. She was already fully the thing that was just starting to happen to the rest of the street.

In the earliest years, when you could still drive a Volvo 240 without feeling self-conscious, the collective task in Ramsey Hill was to relearn certain life skills that your own parents had fled to the suburbs specifically to unlearn, like how to interest the local cops in actually doing their job, and how to protect a bike from a highly motivated thief, and when to bother rousting a drunk from your lawn furniture, and how to encourage feral cats

to shit in somebody else’s children’s sandbox, and how to determine whether a public school sucked too much to bother trying to fix it. There were also more contemporary questions, like: What about those cloth diapers? Worth the bother? And was it true that you could still get milk delivered in glass bottles? Were the Boy Scouts O.K. politically? Was bulgur really necessary? Where to recycle batteries? How to respond when a poor person of color accused you of destroying her neighborhood? Was it true that the glaze of old Fiestaware contained dangerous amounts of lead? How elaborate did a kitchen water filter actually need to be? Did your 240 sometimes not go into overdrive when you pushed the overdrive button? Was it better to offer panhandlers food or nothing? Was it possible to raise unprecedentedly confident, happy, brilliant kids while working full time? Could coffee beans be ground the night before you used them, or did this have to be done in the morning? Had anybody in the history of St. Paul ever had a positive experience with a roofer? What about a good Volvo mechanic? Did your 240 have that problem with the sticky parking-brake cable? And that enigmatically labelled dashboard switch that made such a satisfying Swedish click but seemed not to be connected to anything: what *was* that?

For all queries, Patty Berglund was a resource, a sunny carrier of sociocultural pollen, an affable bee. She was one of the few stay-at-home moms in Ramsey Hill and was famously averse to speaking well of herself or ill of anybody else. She said that she expected to be “be-headed” someday by one of the windows whose sash chains she’d replaced. Her children were “probably” dying of trichinosis from pork she’d undercooked. She wondered if her “addiction” to paint-stripper fumes might be related to her “never” reading books anymore. She confided that she’d been “forbidden” to fertilize Walter’s flowers after



Kanin

"God, these throw pillows are terrible for smothering."

what had happened "last time." There were people with whom her style of self-deprecation didn't sit well—who detected a kind of condescension in it, as if Patty, in exaggerating her own minor defects, were too obviously trying to spare the feelings of less accomplished homemakers. But most people found her humility sincere or at least amusing, and it was, in any case, hard to resist a woman whom your own children liked so much and who remembered not only their birthdays but yours, too, and came to your back door with a plate of cookies or a card or some lilies of the valley in a little thrift-store vase that she told you not to bother returning.

It was known that Patty had grown up in the East, in a suburb of New York City, and had received one of the first women's full scholarships to play basketball at Minnesota, where, in her sophomore year, according to a plaque on the wall of Walter's home office, she'd made second-team All-American. One strange thing about Patty, given her strong family orientation, was that she had no discernible connection to her roots. Whole seasons passed without her setting foot outside St. Paul, and it wasn't clear that anybody from the East, not even her parents, had ever come out to visit. If you inquired point-blank about the parents, she would answer that the two of them did a lot of good

things for a lot of people, her dad had a law practice in White Plains, her mom was a politician, yeah, a New York state assemblywoman. Then she would nod emphatically and say, "Yeah, so, that's what they do," as if the topic had been exhausted.

A game could be made of trying to get Patty to agree that somebody's behavior was "bad." When she was told that Seth and Merrie Paulsen were throwing a big Halloween party for their twins and had deliberately invited every child on the block except Connie Monaghan, Patty would say only that this was very "weird." The next time she saw the Paulsens on the street, they explained that they had tried *all summer* to get Connie Monaghan's mother, Carol, to stop flicking cigarette butts from her bedroom window down into their twins' little wading pool. "That is really weird," Patty agreed, shaking her head, "but, you know, it's not Connie's fault." The Paulsens, however, refused to be satisfied with "weird." They wanted "sociopathic," they wanted "passive-aggressive," they wanted "bad." They needed Patty to select one of these epithets and join them in applying it to Carol Monaghan, but Patty was incapable of going past "weird," and the Paulsens, in turn, refused to add Connie to their invite list.

Carol Monaghan was the only other mother on Barrier Street who'd been

around as long as Patty. She'd come to Ramsey Hill on what you might call a patronage-exchange program, having been a secretary to somebody high level in Hennepin County who moved her out of his district after he made her pregnant. Keeping the mother of your illegitimate child on your own office payroll: by the late seventies, there were no longer so many Twin Cities jurisdictions where this was considered consonant with good government. Carol became one of those distracted, break-taking clerks at the city license bureau while somebody equivalently well connected in St. Paul was hired in reverse across the river. The rental house on Barrier Street, next door to the Berglunds, had presumably been included in the deal; otherwise, it was hard to see why Carol would have consented to live in what was then still basically a slum.

By the late eighties, Carol was the only non-gentrifier left on the block. She smoked Parliaments, bleached her hair, made lurid talons of her nails, fed her daughter heavily processed foods, and came home very late on Thursday nights ("That's Mom's night out," she explained, as if every mom had one), quietly letting herself into the Berglunds' house with the key they'd given her and collecting the sleeping Connie from the sofa where Patty had tucked her under blankets. Patty had been implacably generous in offering to look after Connie while Carol was out working or shopping or doing her Thursday-night business, and Carol had become dependent on her for a ton of free babysitting. It couldn't have escaped Patty's attention that Carol repaid this generosity by ignoring Patty's own daughter, Jessica, and doting inappropriately on her son, Joey ("How about another smooch from the lady-killer?"), and standing very close to Walter at neighborhood functions, in her filmy blouses and her cocktail-waitress heels, praising Walter's home-improvement prowess and shrieking with laughter at everything he said, but for many years the worst that Patty would say of Carol was that single moms had a hard life and if Carol was sometimes weird to her it was probably just to save her pride.

To Seth Paulsen, who talked about Patty a little too often for his wife's taste, the Berglunds were the super-guilty sort

of liberals who needed to forgive everybody so that their own good fortune could be forgiven, who lacked the courage of their privilege. One problem with Seth's theory was that the Berglunds weren't all that privileged; their only known asset was their house, which they'd rebuilt with their own hands. Another problem, as Merrie Paulsen pointed out, was that Patty was no great progressive and certainly no feminist (staying home with her birthday calendar, baking those God-damned birthday cookies) and seemed altogether allergic to politics. If you mentioned an election or a candidate to her, you could see her struggling and failing to be her usual cheerful self—see her becoming agitated and doing too much nodding, too much yeah-yeahing. Merrie, who was ten years older than Patty and looked every year of it, had formerly been active with the S.D.S. in Madison and was now very active in the craze for Beaujolais nouveau. When Seth, at a dinner party, mentioned Patty for the third or fourth time, Merrie went nouveau red in the face and declared that there was *no* larger consciousness, *no* solidarity, *no* political substance, *no* fungible structure, *no* true communitarianism in Patty Berglund's supposed neighborliness, it was all just regressive housewifely bullshit, and, frankly, in Merrie's opinion, if you were to scratch below the nicey-nice surface you might be surprised to find something rather hard and selfish and competitive and Reaganite in Patty; it was obvious that the only things that mattered to her were her children and her house—not her neighbors, *not* the poor, *not* her country, *not* her parents, not even her own husband.

And Patty was undeniably very into her son. Though Jessica was the more obvious credit to her parents—smitten with books, devoted to wildlife, talented at flute, stalwart on the soccer field, coveted as a babysitter, not so pretty as to be morally deformed by it, admired even by Merrie Paulsen—Joey was the child Patty could not shut up about. In her chuckling, confiding, self-deprecating way, she spilled out barrel after barrel of unfiltered detail about her and Walter's difficulties with him. Most of her stories took the form of complaints, and yet nobody doubted that she adored the

boy. She was like a woman bemoaning her gorgeous jerky boyfriend. As if she were proud of having her heart trampled by him: as if her openness to this trampling were the main thing, maybe the only thing, she cared to have the world know about.

"He is being such a little shit," she told the other mothers during the long winter of the Bedtime Wars, when Joey was asserting his right to stay awake as late as Patty and Walter did.

"Is it tantrums? Is he crying?" the other mothers asked.

"Are you kidding?" Patty said. "I *wish* he cried. Crying would be normal, and it would also stop."

"What's he doing, then?" the mothers asked.

"He's questioning the basis of our authority. We make him turn the lights out, but his position is that he shouldn't have to go to sleep until we turn our own lights out, because he's exactly the same as us. And, I swear to God, it is like clockwork, every fifteen minutes, I swear he's lying there staring at his alarm clock, every fifteen minutes he calls out, 'Still awake! I'm still awake!' In this tone of *contempt*, or sarcasm, it's *weird*. And I'm begging Walter not to take the bait, but, no, it's a quarter of midnight again, and Walter is standing in the dark in Joey's room and they're having another argument about the difference between adults and children, and whether a family is a democracy or a benevolent dictatorship, until finally it's *me* who's having the meltdown, you know, lying there in bed, whimpering, 'Please stop, please stop.'"

Merrie Paulsen wasn't entertained by Patty's storytelling. Late in the evening, loading dinner-party dishes into the dishwasher, she remarked to Seth that it was hardly surprising that Joey should be confused about the distinction between children and adults—his own mother seemed to suffer from

some confusion about which of the two she was. Had Seth noticed how, in Patty's stories, the discipline always came from Walter, as if Patty were just some feckless bystander whose job was to be cute?

"I wonder if she's actually in love with Walter or not," Seth mused optimistically, uncorking a final bottle. "Physically, I mean."

"The subtext is always 'My son is extraordinary,'" Merrie said. "She's always complaining about the length of his attention span."

"Well, to be fair," Seth said, "it's in the context of his stubbornness. His infinite patience in defying Walter's authority."

"Every word she says about him is some kind of backhanded brag."

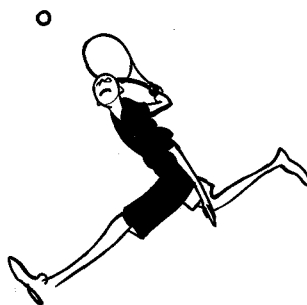
"Don't *you* ever brag?" Seth teased.

"Probably," Merrie said, "but at least I have some minimal awareness of how I sound to other people. And my sense of self-worth is not bound up in how extraordinary our kids are."

"You are the perfect mom," Seth teased.

"No, that would be Patty," Merrie said, accepting more wine. "I'm merely very good."

Things came, Patty complained, too easily to Joey. He was golden-haired and pretty and seemed innately to possess the answers to every test a school could give him, as though multiple-choice sequences of "A"s and "B"s and "C"s and "D"s were encoded in his very DNA. He was uncannily at ease with neighbors five times his age. When his school or his Cub Scout pack forced him to sell candy bars or raffle tickets door to door, he was frank about the "scam" that he was running. He perfected a highly annoying smile of condescension when faced with toys or games that other boys owned but Patty and Walter refused to buy him. To extinguish this smile, his friends insisted on sharing what they had, and so he became a crack video gamer even though his parents didn't believe in video games; he developed an encyclopedic familiarity with the urban music that his parents were at pains to protect his preteen ears from. He was no older than eleven or twelve when, at the dinner table, according to Patty, he accidentally or deliberately called his father "son."



"Oh-ho, did that not go over well with Walter," she told the other mothers.

"That's the kind of thing teen-agers all say to each other now," the mothers said. "It's probably a rap thing."

"That's what Joey said," Patty told them. "He said it was just a word and not even a bad word. And, of course, Walter begged to differ. And I'm sitting there thinking, Wal-ter, Wal-ter, don't get into it, point-less to ar-gue, but, no, he has to try to explain how, for example, even though 'boy' is not a bad word, you still can't say it to a grown man, especially not to a black man, but, of course, the whole problem with Joey is that he refuses to recognize any distinction between children and grownups, and so it ends with Walter saying that there won't be any dessert for him, which Joey then claims he doesn't even want, in fact he doesn't even *like* dessert very much, and I'm sitting there thinking, Wal-ter, Wal-ter, don't get into it, but Walter can't help it—he has to try to *prove* to Joey that, in fact, Joey really *loves* dessert. But Joey won't accept any of Walter's evidence. He's totally lying through his teeth, of course, but he claims he's only ever taken seconds of dessert because it's conventional to, not because he actually likes it, and poor Walter, who can't stand to be lied to, says, 'O.K., if you don't like it, then how about a *month* without dessert?,' and I'm thinking, Oh, Wal-ter, Wal-ter, this isn't going to end well, because Joey's response is 'I will go a *year* without dessert. I will never eat dessert *again*, except to be polite at somebody else's house,' which, bizarrely enough, is a credible threat—he's so stubborn he could probably do it. And I'm like, 'Whoa, guys, time out, dessert is an important food group, let's not get carried away here,' which immediately undercuts Walter's authority, and, since the whole argument has been about his authority, I manage to undo anything positive that he's accomplished."

The other person who loved Joey inordinately was the Monaghan girl, Connie. She was a grave and silent little person with the disconcerting habit of holding your gaze unblinkingly, as if you had nothing in common. She was an afternoon fixture in Patty's kitchen, laboring to mold cookie dough into

geometrically perfect spheres, taking such pains that the butter liquefied and made the dough glisten darkly. Patty formed eleven balls for every one of Connie's, and when they came out of the oven Patty never failed to ask Connie's permission to eat the one "truly outstanding" (smaller, flatter, harder) cookie. Jessica, who was a year older than Connie, seemed content to cede the kitchen to the neighbor girl while she read books or played with her terrariums. Connie didn't pose any threat to somebody as well rounded as Jessica. Connie had no notion of wholeness—was all depth and no breadth. When she was coloring, she got lost in saturating one or two areas with a felt-tip pen, leaving the rest blank and ignoring Patty's cheerful urgings to try some other colors.

Connie's intensive focus on Joey was evident early on to every local mother except, seemingly, Patty, perhaps because Patty herself was so focussed on him. At Linwood Park, where Patty sometimes organized athletics for the kids, Connie sat by herself on the grass, unboored, her hands fashioning a clover-flower ring for nobody, and let the minutes stream past her until Joey took his turn at bat or moved the soccer ball down the field and quickened her interest momentarily. She was like an imaginary friend who happened to be visible. And Joey, in his precocious self-mastery, seldom found it necessary to be mean to her in front of his friends—indeed, he may have figured that to have an actual groupie could only reinforce his social primacy. Connie, for her part, whenever it became clear that the boys were going off to be boys, knew enough to fall back and dematerialize without reproach or entreaty. There was always tomorrow.

When exactly Connie and Joey started fucking wasn't known. Seth Paulsen, without evidence, simply to upset people, enjoyed opining that Joey had been eleven and Connie twelve. Seth's speculation centered on the privacy afforded by a tree fort that Walter had helped Joey build in an ancient crab apple in the vacant lot. By the time Joey finished eighth grade, his name was turning up in the neighbor boys' replies to strenuously casual parental inquiries about the sexual behavior of their

schoolmates, and it later seemed probable that Jessica had been aware of something by the end of that summer—suddenly, without saying why, she became strikingly disdainful of both Connie and her brother. But nobody ever saw them actually hanging out by themselves until the following winter, when the two of them went into business together.

According to Patty, the lesson that Joey had learned from his incessant arguments with Walter was that children were compelled to obey parents because parents had the money. It became yet another example of Joey's extraordinariness: while the other mothers lamented the sense of entitlement with which their kids demanded cash, Patty did laughing caricatures of Joey's chagrin at having to beg Walter for funds. Neighbors who hired Joey knew him to be a surprisingly industrious shoveller of snow and raker of leaves, but Patty said he secretly hated the low wages and felt that shovelling an adult's driveway put him in an undesirable relation to the adult. The ridiculous moneymaking schemes suggested in Scouting publications—selling magazine subscriptions door to door, learning magic tricks and charging admission to magic shows, acquiring the tools of taxidermy and stuffing your neighbors' prize-winning walleyes—all similarly reeked either of vassalage ("I am taxidermist to the ruling class") or, worse, of charity. And so, inevitably, in his quest to liberate himself from Walter, he was drawn to entrepreneurship.

Somebody, maybe even Carol Monaghan herself, was paying Connie's tuition at a small Catholic academy, St. Catherine's, where the girls wore uniforms and were forbidden all jewelry except one ring ("simple, all-metal"), one watch ("simple, no jewels"), and two earrings ("simple, all-metal, half-inch maximum in size"). It happened that one of the popular ninth-grade girls at Joey's own school, Central High, had come home from a family trip to New York City with a cheap watch, widely admired at lunch hour, in whose chewable-looking yellow band a Canal Street vender had thermo-embedded tiny candy-pink plastic letters spelling out a Pearl Jam lyric, "DON'T CALL ME DAUGHTER," at the girl's request. As Joey would later recount in his college-

THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

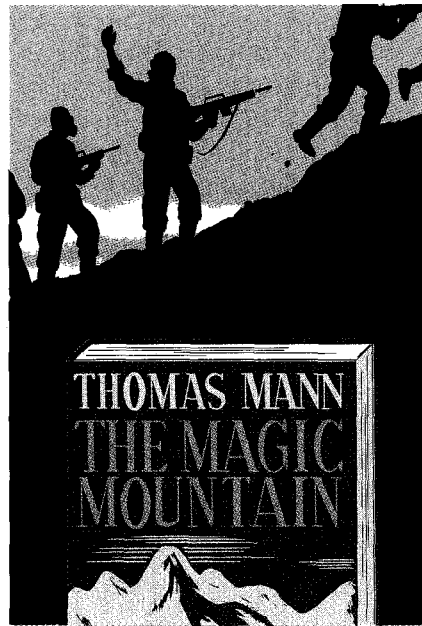
My family used to have a cabin on the mountain called Jahorina, about twenty miles from Sarajevo. Jahorina had a ski resort, and my sister and I would spend our entire monthlong winter break there, skiing and partying. At that time of year, the mountain was full of tourists and friends, but in the summer it was largely depopulated. Cabin owners like my parents went up on weekends, to tinker with the woodwork or the plumbing. But, despite our parents' claims that it was "heaven" up there, compared with the hell of the city, my sister and I avoided spending summers in Jahorina. We preferred to simmer in the cauldron of Sarajevo.

Sometime in the late eighties, though, when I was in my twenties, I started going to Jahorina in the summer for long reading holidays. I would pack my little *fićo* (the Yugoslav replica of a Fiat 600) with books and tapes and move up there for a month or so. I was still living with my parents then, which, besides threatening my rightful privacy and personal sovereignty, made reading with sustained attention pretty hard—my parents were prone to designing elaborate chores for others to accomplish. But in our cabin I could read for eight to ten hours a day, fully in charge of my own time, which I regimented like a monk. I interrupted my monastic mission only to attend to the needs of my foolish body, which, in addition to food and coffee, demanded some occasional exertion. Hence, I went for long hikes up the mountain, to the harsh, barren landscape above the tree line. I avoided other people and delayed for as long as possible my trips on foot to the supermarket, a couple of miles away.

For weeks before leaving for the mountain, I would be assembling my reading list. There were all kinds of books on it: from John le Carré's *Smiley* novels to scholarly works on the origins of the Old Testament myths; from anthologies of contemporary American short stories to the Prince

Valiant comic books. At the top of the list were the thick classic novels that I couldn't focus on in the city, what with my parents' choral nagging and the daily temptations of urban life.

In the cabin, I would enter a kind of hypersensitive trance that allowed me to average four hundred pages a day. The book would become a vast, intricate space



in my head where I stayed even when eating, hiking, or sleeping. It took me less than a week to read "War and Peace," for example, and Bolkonsky and Natasha showed up regularly in my dreams. And while I was reading "The Magic Mountain," on my hikes I conducted conversations with imaginary partners, not unlike the ones between Castorp and Settembrini in Thomas Mann's novel.

In my twenties, I was prone to anxiety and depression, which I experienced as a depletion of my interiority, a vacuum of thought and language. I went to the mountain to replenish my mind, to reboot its language apparatus. My reclusion worried my parents, and my friends thought I was crazy. But I loved the silence cushioning me while I read. At

night, the only sounds came from the bells of roaming cattle and the branches scratching the roof. Excited birds would bid me a good early morning, and I would start reading as soon as I opened my eyes. The controllable austerity healed whatever hurt I had carried up the mountain.

The last time I went to Jahorina was in September, 1991. The war in Croatia was in full swing, and was well on its way to Bosnia. One of my daily rituals became watching the evening news at seven-thirty, and the news was never good. My reading was now primarily a means of thought protection, for once war gets inside your mind it burns and pillages it. Reading was a way not to think about all that could (and would) happen. On that trip, the loneliness was also a little harder to handle, so I brought along our Irish-setter puppy, Mak, to keep me company. In the morning, he licked my cheeks and forehead, leaving a thick coating of saliva behind.

One day, after I had let him out to do whatever puppies do at the crack of dawn, the sound of shooting startled me out of my book. When I looked outside, I saw a military-police unit of the Yugoslav People's Army, wearing gas masks, firing blanks at imaginary enemies, and charging uphill. In their midst was Mak, who in his puppy idiocy was running, jumping, and barking at them. A blank from close range could have killed him, so, in my pajamas and slippers, I ran after the M.P. unit, summoning Mak. He didn't heed my calls and I caught up only when the unit stopped for a breather. The men took off their gas masks and panted, sweat pouring down their faces, while I apologized incoherently. They said nothing; they were too exhausted and too invested in their rehearsal for war. As I stumbled back downhill, dragging Mak by the collar, they assumed new combat positions. For all I knew, they were pointing their guns at me.

—Aleksandar Hemon

application essays, he had immediately taken the initiative to research the wholesale source of this watch and the price of a thermo-embedding press. He'd invested four hundred dollars of his own savings in equipment, had made Connie a sample plastic band ("READY FOR THE PUSH," it said) to flash at St. Catherine's, and then, employing Connie as a courier, had sold personalized watches to fully a quarter of her schoolmates, at thirty dollars each, before the nuns wised up and amended the dress code to forbid watchbands with embedded text. Which, of course—as Patty told the other mothers—struck Joey as an outrage. An entrepreneur develops a great new product and is following the rules, and then the rules suddenly *change*?

"It's not an outrage," Walter told him. "You were benefitting from an artificial restraint of trade. I didn't notice you complaining about the rules when they were working in your favor."

"I made an investment. I took a risk."

"You were exploiting a loophole, and they closed the loophole. Couldn't you see that coming?"

"Well, why didn't you warn me?"

"I did warn you."

"You just warned me that I could lose money."

"Well, and you didn't even lose money. You just didn't make as much as you hoped."

"It's still money I should have had."

"Joey, making money is not a *right*. You're selling junk those girls don't really need and some of them probably can't even afford. That's why Connie's school has a dress code—to be fair to everybody."

"Right—everybody but *me*."

From the way Patty reported this conversation, laughing at Joey's innocent indignation, it was clear to Merrie Paulsen that Patty still had no inkling of what her son was doing with Connie Monaghan. To be sure of it, Merrie probed a little. What did Patty suppose Connie had been getting for her trouble? Was she working on commission?

"Oh, yeah, we told him he had to give her half his profits," Patty said. "But he would've done that anyway. He's always been protective of her, even though he's younger."

"He's like a brother to her . . ."

"No, actually," Patty joked, "he's a lot nicer to her than that. You can ask Jessica what it's like to be his sister."

"Ha, right, ha-ha," Merrie said.

To Seth, later that day, Merrie reported, "It's amazing, she truly has no idea."

"I think it's a mistake," Seth said, "to take pleasure in a fellow-parent's ignorance. It's tempting fate, don't you think?"

"I'm sorry, it's just too funny and delicious. You'll have to do the non-gloating for the two of us and keep our fate at bay."

Toward the end of that winter, in Grand Rapids, Walter's mother collapsed with a pulmonary embolism on the floor of the ladies' dress shop where she worked. Barrier Street knew Mrs. Berglund from her visits at Christmastime, on the children's birthdays, and on her own birthday, for which Patty always took her to a local masseuse and plied her with licorice and macadamia nuts and white chocolate, her favorite treats. Merrie Paulsen referred to her, not unkindly, as "Miss Bianca," after the bespectacled mouse matron in the children's books by Margery Sharp. She had a crêpey, once-pretty face and tremors in her jaw and her hands, one of which had been badly withered by childhood arthritis. She'd been worn out, physically wrecked, Walter said bitterly, by a lifetime of hard labor for his drunk of a dad, at the roadside motel they'd operated near Hibbing, but she was determined to remain independent and look elegant in her widowed years, and so she kept driving her old Chevy Cavalier to the dress shop. At the news of her collapse, Patty and Walter hurried up north, leaving Joey to be supervised by his disdainful older sister. It was soon after the ensuing teen fuckfestival, which Joey conducted in his bedroom in open defiance of Jessica, and which ended only with the sudden death and funeral of Mrs. Berglund, that Patty became a very different kind of neighbor, a much more sarcastic neighbor.

"Oh, Connie, yes," her tune went now, "such a nice little girl, such a quiet little harmless girl, with such a sterling mom. You know, I hear Carol has a new boyfriend, a real manly man, he's like

half her age, which is so great, after all these lonely years. I'm really happy for her. Wouldn't it be terrible if they moved away now, with everything Carol's done to brighten our lives? And Connie, wow, I'd sure miss her, too. Ha-ha. So quiet and nice and grateful."

Patty was looking a mess, gray-faced, poorly slept, underfed. It had taken her an awfully long time to start looking her age, but now at last Merrie Paulsen had been rewarded in her wait for it to happen.

"Safe to say she's figured it out," Merrie said to Seth.

"Theft of her cub—the ultimate crime," Seth said.

"Theft, exactly," Merrie said. "Poor innocent blameless Joey, stolen away by that little intellectual powerhouse next door."

"Well, she is a year and a half older than him."

"Calendrically."

"Say what you will," Seth said, "but Patty really loved Walter's mom. She's got to be hurting."

"Oh, I know, I know. Seth, I know. And now I can honestly be sad for her."

Neighbors who were closer to Patty than the Paulsens reported that Miss Bianca had left her little mouse house, on a minor lake near Grand Rapids, exclusively to Walter and not to his two brothers. There was said to be disagreement between Walter and Patty about how to handle this, Walter wanting to sell the house and share the proceeds with his brothers, Patty insisting that he honor his mother's wish to reward him for being the good son. The younger brother was career military and lived in the Mojave, at the Air Force base there, while the older brother had spent his adult life advancing their father's program of drinking immoderately, exploiting their mother financially, and otherwise neglecting her. Walter and Patty had always taken the kids to his mother's for a week or two in the summer, often bringing along one or two of Jessica's neighborhood friends, who described the property as rustic and woodsy and not too terrible bugwise. As a kindness, perhaps, to Patty, who appeared to be doing some immoderate drinking of her own—her complexion in the morning, when she came out

to collect the blue-wrapped New York Times and the green-wrapped Star-Tribune from her front walk, was all Chardonnay splotch—Walter eventually agreed to keep the house as a vacation place, and in June, as soon as school let out, Patty took Joey up north to help her empty drawers and clean and repaint while Jessica stayed home with Walter and took an enrichment class in poetry.

Several neighbors, the Paulsens not among them, brought their boys for visits to the lakeside house that summer. They found Patty in much better spirits. One father privately invited Seth Paulsen to imagine her suntanned and barefoot, in a black one-piece bathing suit and beltless jeans, a look very much to Seth's taste. Publicly, everyone remarked on how attentive and unsullen Joey was, and what a good time he and Patty seemed to be having. The two of them made all visitors join them in a complicated parlor game that they called Associations. Patty stayed up late in front of her mother-in-law's TV, amusing Joey with her intricate knowledge of syndicated sixties and seventies sitcoms. Joey, having discovered that their lake was unidentified on local maps—it was really just a large pond, with one other house on it—had christened it Nameless, and Patty pronounced the name tenderly, sentimentally, "our little Nameless Lake." When Seth Paulsen learned from one of the returning fathers that Joey was working long hours up there, cleaning gutters and cutting brush and scraping paint, he wondered whether Patty might be paying Joey a solid wage for his services, whether this might be part of the deal. But nobody could say.

As for Connie, the Paulsens could hardly look out a Monaghan-side window without seeing her waiting. She really was a very patient girl, she had the metabolism of a fish in winter. She worked evenings, busing tables at W. A. Frost, but all afternoon on weekdays she sat on her front stoop while ice-cream trucks went by and younger children played, and on weekends she sat in a lawn chair behind the house, glancing occasionally at the loud, violent, haphazard tree-removal and construction work that her mother's new boyfriend, Blake, had undertaken with his non-

unionized buddies from the building trades, but mostly just waiting.

"So, Connie, what's interesting in your life these days?" Seth asked her from the alley.

"You mean, apart from Blake?"

"Yes, apart from Blake."

Connie considered briefly and then shook her head. "Nothing," she said.

"Are you bored?"

"Not really."

"Going to movies? Reading books?"

Connie fixed Seth with her steady, we-have-nothing-in-common gaze. "I saw 'Batman,'" she said.

Blake was a goateed young backhoe operator whom Carol had met across the counter at the license bureau. His arrival on Barrier Street had been heralded by a dramatic change in Carol's look: out had gone the complicated hair and escort-service dresses, in had come snug pants, a simple shag cut, and less makeup. A Carol nobody had ever seen, an actually happy Carol, had hopped buoyantly from Blake's F-250 pickup, letting anthem rock throb up and down the street, and slammed the passenger-side door with a mighty push. Soon Blake began spending nights at her house, shuffling around in a Vikings jersey with his work boots unlaced and a beer can in his fist, and before long he was chainsawing every tree in her back yard and running wild with a rented backhoe. On the bumper of his truck were the words "I'M WHITE AND I VOTE."

The Paulsens, having recently completed a protracted renovation of their

own, were reluctant to complain about the noise and the mess, and Walter, on the other side, was too nice or too busy, but when Patty finally came home, late in August, after her months in the country with Joey, she was practically unhinged in her dismay, going up and down the street, door to door, wild-eyed, to vilify Carol Monaghan. "Excuse me," she said, "what happened here? Can somebody tell me what happened? Did somebody declare war on trees without telling me? Who is this Paul Bunyan with the truck? What's the story? Is she not renting anymore? Are you allowed to annihilate your trees if you're just renting? How can you tear the back wall off a house you don't even own? Did she somehow buy the place without our knowing it? How could she do that? She can't even change a light bulb without calling up my husband! 'Sorry to bother you at the dinner hour, Walter, but when I flip this light switch nothing happens. Do you mind coming over right away? And while you're here, hon, can you help me with my taxes? They're due tomorrow and my nails are wet.' How could this person get a mortgage? Doesn't she have Victoria's Secret bills to pay? How is she even allowed to have a boyfriend? Isn't there some fat guy over in Minneapolis? Shouldn't somebody maybe get the word out to the fat guy?"

Not until Patty reached the door of the Paulsens, far down on her list of go-to neighbors, did she get some answers. Merrie explained that Carol Monaghan was, in fact, no longer rent-



"It turns out everyone here is self-published."

ing. Carol's house had been one of several hundred that the city housing authority had come to own during the blight years and then, as neighborhoods rebounded and cash-starved mayors looked around for windfalls, had begun selling off at bargain prices to insiders.

"How did I not know this?" Patty said.

"You never asked," Merrie said. And couldn't resist adding, "You never seemed particularly interested in government."

"And you say she got it cheap."

"Very cheap. It helps to know the right people."

"You know, I always loved this neighborhood," Patty said. "I loved living here, even at the beginning. And now suddenly everything looks so dirty and ugly to me."

"Don't get depressed, get involved," Merrie said, and gave her some literature.

"I wouldn't want to be Walter right now," Seth remarked as soon as Patty was gone.

"I'm frankly glad to hear that," Merrie said.

"Was it just me, or did you hear an undertone of marital discontent? I mean, helping Carol with her taxes? You know anything about that? I thought that was very interesting. I hadn't heard about that. And now he's failed to protect their pretty view of Carol's trees."

"The whole thing is so Reaganite-regressive," Merrie said. "She thought she could live in her own little bubble, make her own little world. Her own little doll house."

The add-on structure that rose out of Carol's back-yard mud pit, weekend by weekend, over the next nine months, was like a giant utilitarian boat shed with three plain windows punctuating its expanses of vinyl siding. Carol and Blake referred to it as a "great-room," a concept hitherto foreign to Ramsey Hill. Following the cigarette-butt controversy, the Paulsens had installed a high fence and planted a line of ornamental spruces that had since grown up enough to screen them from the spectacle. Only the Berglunds' sight lines were unobstructed, and before long the other neighbors were avoiding conversation with Patty, as they never had before, because of her fixation

on what she called "the hangar." They waved from the street and called out hellos but were careful not to slow down and get sucked in. The consensus among the working mothers was that Patty had too much time on her hands. In the old days, she'd been great with the little kids, teaching them sports and domestic arts, but now most of the kids on the street were teen-agers. No matter how she tried to fill her days, she was always within sight or earshot of the work next door. Every few hours, she emerged from her house and paced up and down her backyard, peering over at the great-room like

an animal whose nest had been disturbed, and sometimes in the evening she went knocking on the great-room's temporary plywood door.

"Hey, Blake, how's it going?"

"Going just fine."

"Sounds like it! Hey, you know what, that Skil saw's pretty loud for eight-thirty at night. How would you feel about knocking off for the day?"

"Not too good, actually."

"Well, how about if I just ask you to stop, then?"

"I don't know. How about you letting me get my work done?"

DON'T DO THAT

It was bring-your-own if you wanted anything hard, so I brought Johnnie Walker Red along with some resentment I'd held in for a few weeks, which was not helped by the sight of little nameless things pierced with toothpicks on the tables, or by talk that promised to be nothing if not small. But I'd consented to come, and I knew what part of the house their animals would be sequestered, whose company I loved. What else can I say,

except that old retainer of slights and wrongs, that bad boy I hadn't quite outgrown—I'd brought him along, too. I was out to cultivate a mood. My hosts greeted me, but did not ask about my soul, which was when I was invited by Johnnie Walker Red to find the right kind of glass, and pour. I toasted the air. I said hello to the wall, then walked past a group of women dressed to be seen, undressing them one by one, and went up the stairs to where

the Rottweilers were, Rosie and Tom, and got down with them on all fours. They licked the face I offered them, and I proceeded to slick back my hair with their saliva, and before long I felt like a wild thing, ready to mess up the party, scarf the hors d'œuvres. But the dogs said, No, don't do that, calm down, after a while they open the door and let you out, they pet your head, and everything you might have held against them is gone, and you're good friends again. Stay, they said.

—Stephen Dunn

"I'd actually feel pretty bad about that, because the noise is really bothering us."

"Yeah, well, you know what? Too bad."

Patty had a loud, involuntary, whinny-like laugh. "Ha-ha-ha! Too bad?"

"Yeah, listen, I'm sorry about the noise. But Carol says there was about five years of noise coming out of your place when you were fixing it up."

"Ha-ha-ha. I don't remember her complaining."

"You were doing what you had to do. Now I'm doing what I have to do."

"What you're doing is really ugly, though. I'm sorry, but it's kind of hideous. Just—horrible and hideous. Honestly. As a matter of pure fact. Not that that's really the issue. The issue is the Skil saw."

"You're on private property and you need to leave now."

"O.K., so I guess I'll be calling the cops."

"That's fine, go ahead."

You could see her pacing in the alley then, trembling with frustration. She did repeatedly call the police about the noise, and a few times they actually came and had a word with Blake, but they soon got tired of hearing from her and did not come back until the following February, when somebody slashed all four of the beautiful new snow tires on Blake's F-250 and Blake and Carol directed officers to the next-door neighbor who'd been phoning in so many complaints. This resulted in Patty again going up and down the street, knocking on doors, ranting. "The obvious suspect, right? The mom next door with a couple of teen-age kids. Hard-core-criminal me, right? Lunatic me! He's got the biggest, ugliest vehicle on the street, he's got bumper stickers that offend pretty much anybody who's not a white supremacist, but, God, what a mystery, who else but me could want to slash his tires? Apparently it's not enough for them to nail a barn onto the back of their house, they've also got to sic the cops on me because I don't happen to love the sound of Paul Bunyan's router at ten at night outside my bedroom window."

Merrie Paulsen was convinced that Patty was, in fact, the slasher.

"I don't see it," Seth said. "I mean, she's obviously suffering, but she's not a liar."

"Right, except I didn't actually notice her saying she didn't do it."

"My question is, where is Walter?"

"Walter is killing himself earning his salary so that she can stay home all day and be a mad housewife. He's being a good dad to Jessica and some sort of reality principle to Joey. I'd say he has his hands full."

Walter's most salient quality, besides his love of Patty, was his niceness. He was the sort of good listener who seemed to find everybody else more interesting and impressive than himself. He was preposterously fair-skinned, weak in the chin, cherubically curly up top, and had worn the same round wire frames forever. He'd begun his career at 3M as an attorney in the counsel's office, but he'd failed to thrive there and was shunted into outreach and philanthropy, a corporate cul-de-sac where niceness was an asset. On Barrier Street he was always handing out great free tickets to the Guthrie and the Chamber Orchestra and telling neighbors about encounters he'd had with famous locals such as Garrison Keillor and Kirby Puckett and, once, Prince. More recently, and surprisingly, he'd left 3M altogether and become a development officer for the Nature Conservancy. Nobody except the Paulsens had suspected him of harboring such reserves of discontent, but Walter was no less enthusiastic about nature than he was about culture, and the only outward change in his life was his new scarcity at home on weekends.

This scarcity may have been one reason that he didn't intervene, as he might have been expected to, in Patty's battle with Carol Monaghan. Walter had strong feelings about courtesy and fairness and amity, and he was borderline uxorious as a husband, but he was apparently willing neither to support his wife nor to curb her. His response, if you asked him point-blank about her battle, was to giggle nervously. "I'm kind of a neutral bystander on that one," he said. And a neutral bystander he remained all through the spring and summer of Joey's sophomore year and into the following fall, when Jessica went off

to college in the East and Joey moved out of his parents' house and in with Carol, Blake, and Connie.

The move was a stunning act of sedition and a dagger to Patty's heart—the beginning of the end of her life in Ramsey Hill. Joey had spent July and August in Montana, working on the high-country ranch of one of Walter's major Nature Conservancy donors, and had returned with broad, manly shoulders and two new inches of height. Walter, who didn't ordinarily brag, had vouchsafed to the Paulsens, at a picnic in August, that the donor had called him up to say how "blown away" he was by Joey's fearlessness and tirelessness in throwing calves and dipping sheep. Patty, however, at the same picnic, was already vacant-eyed with pain. In June, before Joey went to Montana, she'd again taken him up to Nameless Lake to help her improve the property, and the only neighbor who'd seen them there described a terrible afternoon of watching mother and son lacerate each other over and over, airing it all in plain sight, Joey mocking Patty's mannerisms and finally calling her "stupid" to her face, at which Patty had cried out, "Ha-ha-ha! Stupid! God, Joey! Your maturity just never ceases to amaze me! Calling your mother stupid in front of other people! That's just so attractive in a person! What a big, tough, independent man you are!"

By summer's end, Blake had nearly finished work on the great-room and was outfitting it with such Blakean gear as a PlayStation, Foosball, a refrigerated beer keg, a large-screen TV, an air-hockey table, a stained-glass Vikings chandelier, and mechanized recliners. Neighbors were left to imagine Patty's dinner-table sarcasm regarding these amenities, and Joey's declarations that she was being ignorant and unfair, and Walter's angry demands that Joey apologize to Patty, but the night when Joey defected to the house next door didn't need to be imagined, because Carol Monaghan was happy to describe it, in a loud and somewhat gloating voice, to any neighbor sufficiently disloyal to the Berglunds to listen to her.

"Joey was so calm, so calm," Carol said. "I swear to God, you couldn't melt butter in his mouth. I went over there with Connie to support him and let everybody

know that I'm totally in favor of the arrangement, because, you know Walter, he's so considerate, he's going to worry that it's an imposition on me. And Joey was totally responsible like always. He just wanted to be on the same page and make sure all the cards were on the table. He explained how he and Connie had discussed things with me, and I told Walter—because I knew he'd be worried about this—I told him that groceries were not a problem. Blake and I are a family now and we're happy to feed one more, and Joey's also very good about the dishes and garbage and being neat, and plus, I told Walter, he and Patty used to be so generous to Connie and give her meals and all. I wanted to acknowledge that, because they really were generous when I didn't have my life together, and I've never been anything but grateful for that. And Joey's just so responsible and calm. He explains how, since Patty won't even let Connie in the house, he really doesn't have any other choice if he wants to spend time with her, and I chime in and say how totally in support of the relationship I am—if only all the other young people in this world were as responsible as those two, the world would be a much better place—and how much more preferable it is for them to be in my house, safe and responsible, instead of sneaking around and getting in trouble. Connie's a special person and I don't know what would have happened to her if it wasn't for Joey. I'm so grateful to him, he'll always be welcome in my house. I said that to them.

"And I know Patty doesn't like me, she's always looked down her nose at me and been snooty about Connie. I know that. I know a thing or two about the things Patty's capable of. I knew she was going to throw some kind of fit. And so her face gets all twisted, and she's like, 'You think he *loves* your daughter? You think he's *in love* with her?' In this high little voice. Like it's impossible for somebody like Joey to be in love with Connie, because I didn't go to college or whatever, or I don't have as big a house or come from New York City or whatever, or I have to work an honest-to-Christ forty-hour full-time job, unlike her. Patty's so full of disrespect for me, you can't believe it. But Walter I thought I could talk to. He really is a sweetie. His face is beet red, I think because he's

embarrassed, and he says, 'Carol, you and Connie need to leave so we can talk to Joey privately.' Which I'm fine with. I'm not there to make trouble. I'm not a troublemaking person.

"Except then Joey says no. He says he's not asking permission, he's just informing them about what he's going to do, and there's nothing to discuss. And that's when Walter loses it. Just loses it. He's got tears running down his face he's so upset—and I can understand that, because Joey's his youngest, and it's not Walter's fault that Patty is so unreasonable and mean to Connie that Joey can't stand to live with them anymore. But he starts yelling at the top of his lungs, like, 'YOU ARE SIXTEEN YEARS OLD AND YOU ARE NOT GOING ANYWHERE UNTIL YOU FINISH HIGH SCHOOL.' And Joey's just smiling at him, you couldn't melt butter in his mouth. Joey says it's not against the law for him to leave, and anyway he's only moving next door. Totally reasonable. I wish I'd been one per cent as smart and cool when I was sixteen. I mean, he's just a great kid.

"But it made me feel kind of bad for Walter, because he starts yelling all this stuff about how he's not going to pay for Joey's college, and Joey's not going to get to go back to Montana next summer, and all he's asking is that Joey come to dinner and sleep in his own bed and be a part of the family. And Joey's like, 'I'm still part of the family,' which, by the way, he never said he wasn't. But Walter's stomping around the kitchen—for a couple of seconds I think he's actually going to hit him, but he's just totally lost it, he's yelling, 'GET OUT, GET OUT, I'M SICK OF IT, GET OUT,' and then he's gone and you can hear him upstairs in Joey's room, opening up Joey's drawers or whatever, and Patty runs upstairs and they start screaming at each other, and Connie and I are hugging Joey, because he's the one reasonable person in the family and we

feel so sorry for him, and that's when I know for sure that it's the right thing for him to move in with us. Walter comes stomping downstairs again and we can hear Patty screaming like a maniac—she's totally lost it—and Walter starts yelling again, 'DO YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO YOUR MOTHER?' Because it's all about Patty, see, she's always got to be the victim. And Joey's just standing there shaking his head, because it's so obvious. Why would he want to live in a place like this?"

Although some neighbors did undoubtedly take satisfaction in Patty's reaping the whirlwind of her son's extraordinariness, the fact remained that Carol Monaghan had never been well liked on Barrier Street, Blake was widely deplored, Connie was thought spooky, and nobody had ever really trusted Joey. As word of his insurrection spread, the emotions prevailing among the Ramsey Hill gentry were pity for Walter, anxiety about Patty's psychological health, and an overwhelming sense of relief and gratitude at how normal their own children were—how happy to accept parental largesse, how innocently demanding of help with their homework or their college applications, how compliant in phoning in their after-school whereabouts, how divulging of their little day-to-day bruising, how reassuringly predictable in their run-ins with sex and pot and alcohol. The ache emanating from the Berglunds' house was *sui generis*. Walter—unaware, you had to hope, of Carol's blabbing about his night of "losing it"—acknowledged awkwardly to various neighbors that he and Patty had been "fired" as parents and were doing their best not to take it too personally. "He comes over to study sometimes," Walter said, "but right now he seems more comfortable spending his nights at Carol's. We'll see how long that lasts."

"How's Patty taking all this?" Seth Paulsen asked him.

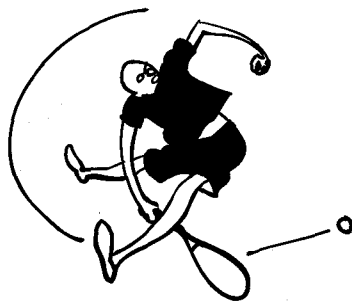
"Not well."

"We'd love to get you guys over for dinner some night soon."

"That would be great," Walter said, "but I think Patty's going up to my mom's old house for a while. She's been fixing it up, you know."

"I'm worried about her," Seth said with a catch in his voice.

"So am I, a little bit. I've seen her play



in pain, though. She tore up her knee in her junior year and played another two games on it."

"But then didn't she have, um, career-ending surgery?"

"It was more a point about her toughness, Seth. About her playing through pain."

"Right."

Walter and Patty never did get over to the Paulsens for dinner. Patty was absent from Barrier Street, hiding out at Nameless Lake for long stretches of the winter and spring that followed, and even when her car was in the driveway—for example, at Christmastime, when Jessica returned from college and, according to her friends, had a "blow-out fight" with Joey which resulted in his spending more than a week in his old bedroom (cynics noted that he'd moved back just in time to be eligible for Christmas presents)—Patty eschewed the neighborhood get-togethers at which her baked goods and affability had once been such welcome fixtures. She was sometimes seen receiving visits from fortyish women who, based on their hair styles and the bumper stickers on their Subarus, were thought to be old basketball teammates of hers, and there was talk about her drinking again, but this was mostly just a guess, since, for all her friendliness, she had never made an actual close friend in Ramsey Hill.

By New Year's, Joey was back at Carol and Blake's. A large part of that house's allure was presumed to be the bed he shared with Connie. He was known by his friends to be bizarrely and militantly opposed to masturbation, the mere mention of which never failed to elicit a condescending smile from him; he claimed that it was an ambition of his to go through life without resorting to it. More perspicacious neighbors, the Paulsens among them, suspected that Joey also enjoyed being the smartest person in the house. He became the prince of the great-room, making its pleasures available to everyone he favored with his friendship (and making the unsupervised beer keg a bone of contention at family dinners all over the neighborhood). His manner with Carol verged unsettlingly close to flirtation, and Blake he charmed by loving all the things that Blake himself loved, especially Blake's power tools and Blake's truck, at the wheel



"I want to read something targeted directly at me."

of which he learned how to drive. From the annoying way he smiled at his schoolmates' enthusiasm for Al Gore and Senator Wellstone, as if liberalism were a weakness on a par with masturbation, it seemed he'd even embraced some of Blake's politics. He worked construction the next summer instead of returning to Montana.

And everybody had the sense, fairly or not, that Walter—his niceness—was to blame. Instead of dragging Joey home by the hair and making him behave himself, instead of knocking Patty over the head with a rock and making her behave herself, he disappeared into his work with the Nature Conservancy, where he'd rather quickly become the state chapter's executive director, and let the house stand empty evening after evening, let the flower beds go to seed and the hedges go unclipped and the windows go unwashed, let the dirty urban snow engulf the warped "GORE-LIEBERMAN" sign still stuck in the front yard. Even the Paulsens lost interest in the Berglunds, now that Merrie was running for city council. Patty spent all of the following summer away at Nameless Lake, and soon after her return—a month after Joey went off to the University of Virginia under financial circumstances that were unknown in Ram-

sey Hill, and two weeks after the great national tragedy—a "FOR SALE" sign went up in front of the Victorian into which she and Walter had poured fully half their lives. Walter had already begun commuting to a new job in Washington. Though housing prices would soon be rebounding to unprecedented heights, the local market was still near the bottom of its post-9/11 slump. Patty oversaw the sale of the house, at an unhappy price, to an earnest black professional couple with three-year-old twins. In February, the two Berglunds went door to door along the street one final time, taking leave with polite formality, Walter asking after everybody's children and conveying his very best wishes for each of them, Patty saying little but looking strangely youthful again, like the girl who'd pushed her stroller down the street before the neighborhood was even a neighborhood.

"It's a wonder," Seth Paulsen remarked to Merrie afterward, "that the two of them are even still together."

Merrie shook her head. "I don't think they've figured out yet how to live." ♦

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Jonathan Franzen reads stories by Ian Frazier and Veronica Geng on the fiction podcast.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS



The cover of R. Crumb's newest work, an illustrated version of "The Book of Genesis," contains a warning label: "ADULT SUPERVISION RECOMMENDED FOR MINORS." Crumb says that he wanted to prevent people from thinking, Oh, a Bible comic book; I'll give it to my kid! Crumb, who is sixty-five and will become a grandfather this fall, around the time the book appears, was worried that readers might forget what the Bible is really like.

Crumb, the creator of Mr. Natural, Fritz the Cat, and "Keep On Truckin'," started tackling the Bible five years ago. At first, he thought about doing a take-off of the story of Adam and Eve, and then a friend suggested that he do the whole of Genesis. Crumb accepted the challenge, but the text seemed to him so bizarre that he quickly realized he couldn't sustain a satirical approach. He resolved to use the words of the Bible unabridged: "I did it as a straight illustration job."

Crumb was brought up Catholic and was familiar with the basic Bible stories. But when he started to read the Bible closely he found it dense. He labored over every sentence and consulted many translations. He drew on his interest in what he calls "the dawn of civilization"—the history and myths of Sumer, Babylon, Akkad, and ancient Egypt. He likes the "crypto-cultish" section of bookstores, and is fascinated by the tortuous processes by which philologists have managed to decipher cuneiform and other ancient scripts.

By the time he came to the story of Noah, though, he was annoyed. He had begun to realize, he says, that "the whole thing is a piece of patriarchal propaganda, engineered to consciously and deliberately suppress matriarchy." He decided not to fight the words but, instead, to try to reveal in his drawings as much of domestic life as he could. To help visualize the period details, he watched swords-and-

sandals epics, such as "The Ten Commandments" (his friend Peter Poplaski freeze-framed scenes and photographed them), and visited museums ("I liked the Assyrian section of the British Museum much better than the Mesopotamian-antiquities section of the Louvre").

Since 1990, Crumb and his wife, the artist Aline Kominsky-Crumb, have lived in a medieval village in southern France. Aline decided that the project required monastic isolation, so she found her husband a shepherd's hut and brought him baskets of food. "That's why I dedicated the book to her," he says.

Crumb, who says he suspects that God exists, is broadly curious about the spiritual forces in the universe. He occasionally turns to Ecclesiastes and the Gospel of Thomas for spiritual guidance, but he thinks it would be crazy to try to find any spiritual meaning in Genesis: "It's much too primitive."

—Françoise Mouly

Chapter 1

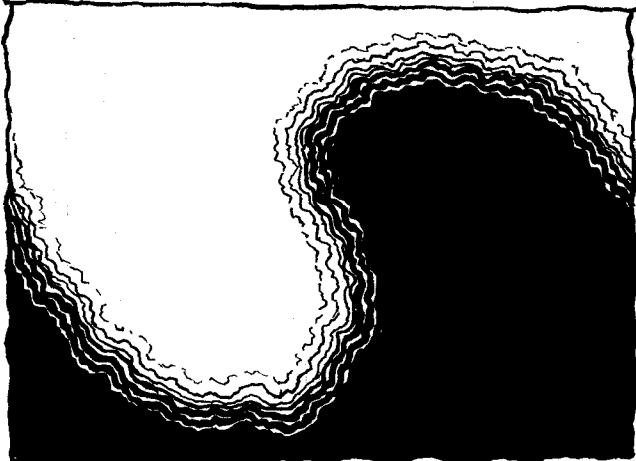
WHEN GOD BEGAN TO
CREATE HEAVEN AND
EARTH, THE EARTH
WAS THEN WITHOUT FORM,
AND VOID, AND DARKNESS
WAS OVER THE DEEP, AND
GOD'S BREATH HOVERING
OVER THE WATERS.



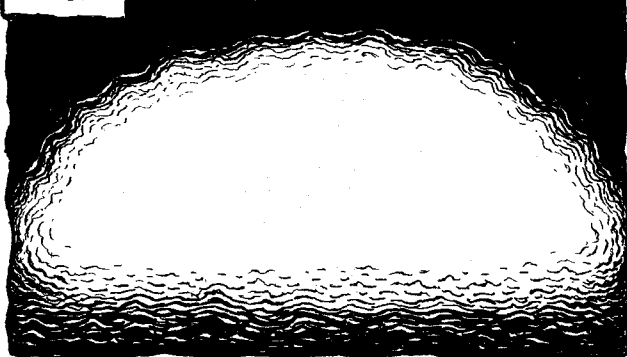
AND GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE LIGHT." AND THERE WAS LIGHT.



AND GOD SAW THE LIGHT, THAT IT WAS GOOD, AND GOD DIVIDED THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS. AND GOD CALLED THE LIGHT DAY, AND THE DARKNESS HE CALLED NIGHT. AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING, A *FIRST* DAY.



AND GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE A VAULT IN THE MIDST OF THE WATERS, AND LET IT DIVIDE WATER FROM WATER." AND GOD MADE THE VAULT AND IT DIVIDED THE WATER BENEATH THE VAULT FROM THE WATER ABOVE THE VAULT, AND SO IT WAS. AND GOD CALLED THE VAULT HEAVENS, AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING, A *SECOND* DAY.



AND GOD SAID, "LET THE WATERS UNDER THE HEAVENS BE GATHERED IN ONE PLACE SO THAT THE DRY LAND WILL APPEAR," AND SO IT WAS. AND GOD CALLED THE DRY LAND EARTH, AND THE GATHERING OF WATERS HE CALLED SEAS, AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD.



AND GOD SAID, "LET THE EARTH BRING FORTH GRASS, PLANTS YIELDING SEED OF EACH KIND, AND TREES BEARING FRUIT OF EACH KIND, THAT HAS ITS SEED WITHIN IT UPON THE EARTH." AND SO IT WAS.



AND THE EARTH PUT FORTH GRASS, PLANTS YIELDING SEED OF EACH KIND, AND TREES BEARING FRUIT THAT HAS ITS SEED WITHIN IT OF EACH KIND, AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD, AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING, A *THIRD* DAY.



AND GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE VAULT OF THE HEAVENS TO DIVIDE THE DAY FROM THE NIGHT, AND LET THEM BE FOR SIGNS FOR THE FIXED TIMES AND FOR DAYS AND YEARS, AND THEY SHALL BE LIGHTS IN THE VAULT OF THE HEAVENS TO GIVE LIGHT UPON THE EARTH." AND SO IT WAS.



AND GOD MADE THE TWO GREAT LIGHTS, THE GREATER LIGHT TO DOMINATE THE DAY AND THE LESSER LIGHT TO DOMINATE THE NIGHT AND THE STARS.



AND GOD PLACED THEM IN THE VAULT OF THE HEAVENS TO GIVE LIGHT UPON THE EARTH, AND TO RULE OVER THE DAY AND OVER THE NIGHT, AND TO DIVIDE THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS. AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING, A **FOURTH** DAY.



AND GOD SAID, "LET THE WATERS BRING FORTH SWARMS OF LIVING CREATURES AND BIRDS THAT FLY OVER THE EARTH ACROSS THE VAULT OF THE HEAVENS." AND GOD CREATED THE GREAT SEA MONSTERS, AND EVERY LIVING CREATURE THAT CRAWLS, WHICH THE WATER HAD BROUGHT FORTH IN SWARMS, AND ALL THE WINGED BIRDS OF EVERY KIND, AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD.



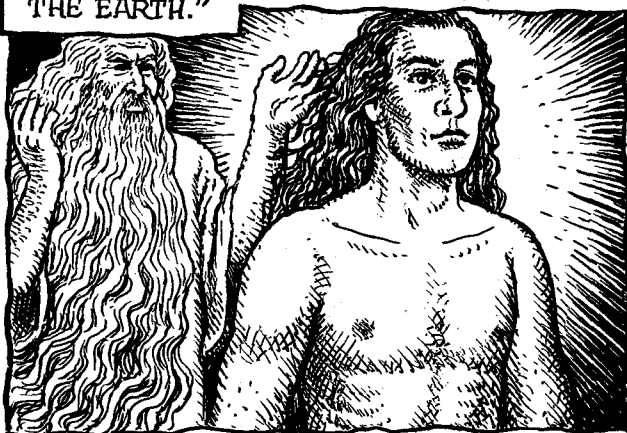
AND GOD BLESSED THEM, SAYING, "BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY AND FILL THE WATER IN THE SEAS AND LET THE BIRDS MULTIPLY IN THE EARTH." AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING, A **FIFTH** DAY.



AND GOD SAID,
"LET THE EARTH
BRING FORTH LIV-
ING CREATURES
OF EACH KIND,
CATTLE AND
CRAWLING THINGS
AND WILD BEASTS
OF EACH KIND."
AND SO IT WAS.
AND GOD MADE
WILD BEASTS
OF EACH KIND
AND CATTLE OF
EVERY KIND, AND
ALL CRAWLING
THINGS ON THE
GROUND OF
EACH KIND,
AND GOD SAW
THAT IT WAS
GOOD.



AND GOD SAID, "LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR
OWN IMAGE, AFTER OUR LIKENESS; AND LET
THEM HAVE DOMINION OVER THE FISH OF THE
SEA AND OVER THE BIRDS OF THE HEAVENS, AND
THE CATTLE, AND OVER THE EARTH, AND OVER
EVERY CRAWLING THING THAT CRAWLS UPON
THE EARTH."

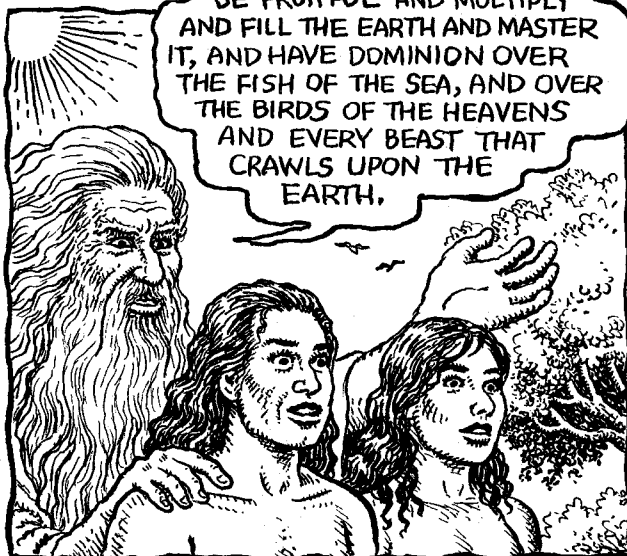


AND GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE,
IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM,
MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.



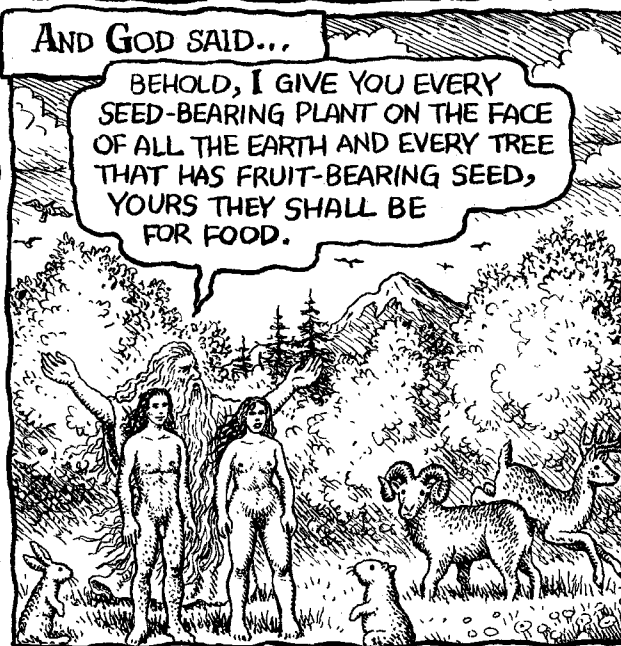
AND GOD BLESSED THEM, AND GOD SAID
TO THEM...

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY
AND FILL THE EARTH AND MASTER
IT, AND HAVE DOMINION OVER
THE FISH OF THE SEA, AND OVER
THE BIRDS OF THE HEAVENS
AND EVERY BEAST THAT
CRAWLS UPON THE
EARTH.



AND GOD SAID...

BEHOLD, I GIVE YOU EVERY
SEED-BEARING PLANT ON THE FACE
OF ALL THE EARTH AND EVERY TREE
THAT HAS FRUIT-BEARING SEED,
YOURS THEY SHALL BE
FOR FOOD.



"AND TO EVERY BEAST OF THE EARTH, AND TO EVERY BIRD OF THE HEAVENS, AND TO EVERYTHING THAT CRAWLS ON THE EARTH, WHICH HAS THE BREATH OF LIFE WITHIN IT, I GIVE ALL THE GREEN PLANTS FOR FOOD." AND SO IT WAS.



AND GOD SAW ALL THAT HE HAD MADE, AND BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD. AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING, THE **SIXTH DAY**.



Chapter 2

THUS THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH WERE COMPLETED, AND ALL THEIR ARRAY. AND ON THE **SEVENTH DAY** GOD FINISHED THE WORK WHICH HE HAD BEEN DOING, AND HE CEASED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL THE WORK WHICH HE HAD DONE. AND GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY, AND MADE IT HOLY, FOR ON IT HE HAD CEASED FROM ALL HIS TASK THAT HE HAD CREATED TO DO.



SUCH IS THE TALE OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH WHEN THEY WERE CREATED.

ON THE DAY THE LORD GOD MADE EARTH AND HEAVENS, WHEN NO SHRUB OF THE FIELD WAS YET ON EARTH AND NO GRASSES OF THE FIELD HAD YET SPROUTED, BECAUSE THE LORD GOD HAD NOT SENT RAIN UPON THE EARTH AND THERE WAS NO MAN TO TILL THE SOIL, BUT WETNESS WOULD WELL UP FROM THE GROUND TO WATER ALL THE WHOLE SURFACE OF THE EARTH, THEN THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN FROM THE DIRT OF THE GROUND, AND BLEW INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE, AND MAN BECAME A LIVING CREATURE.



AND THE LORD GOD PLANTED A GARDEN IN EDEN, TO THE EAST; AND THERE HE PUT THE MAN WHOM HE HAD FORMED. AND OUT OF THE GROUND THE LORD GOD CAUSED TO GROW EVERY TREE THAT WAS PLEASING TO THE SIGHT AND GOOD FOR FOOD, WITH THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GARDEN, AND THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.



A RIVER RUNS OUT OF EDEN TO WATER THE GARDEN, AND IT THEN DIVIDES AND BECOMES FOUR STREAMS. THE NAME OF THE FIRST IS PISHON, THE ONE THAT WINDS THROUGH THE WHOLE LAND OF HAVILAH, WHERE THERE IS GOLD. THE GOLD OF THAT LAND IS GOOD; BDEL-LIUM IS THERE, AND LAPIS LAZULI.



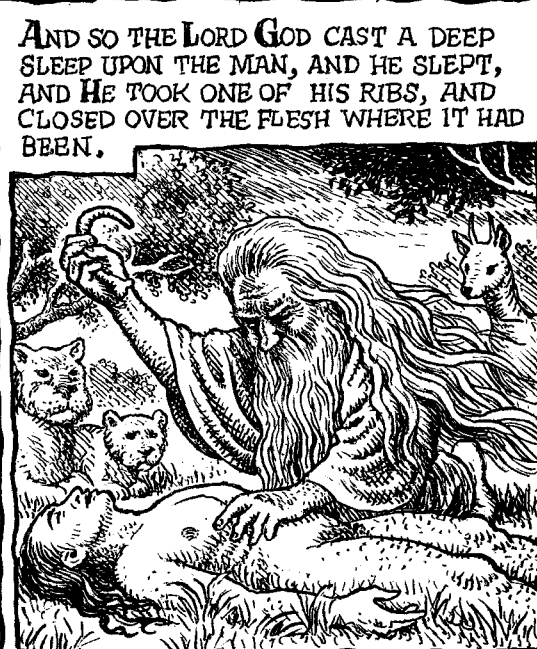
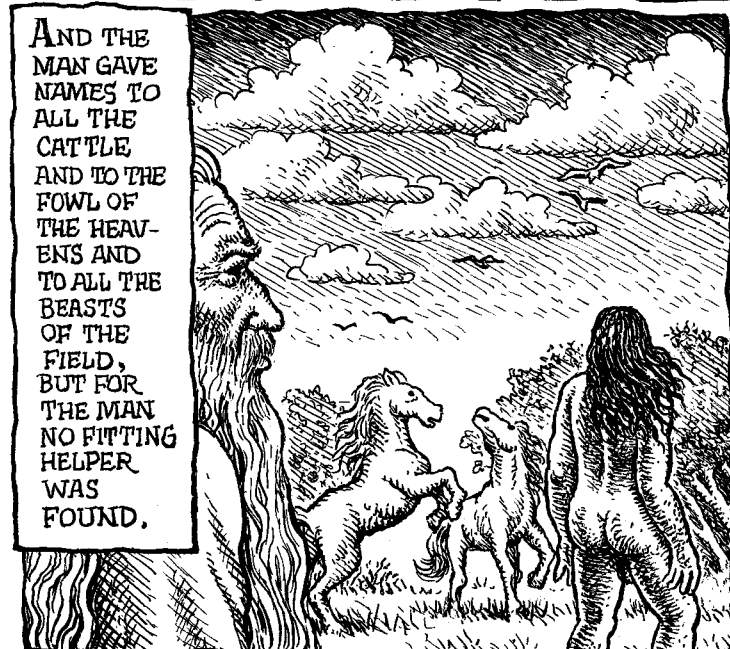
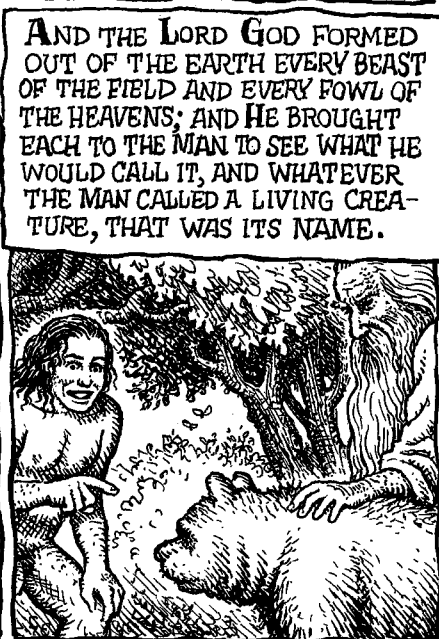
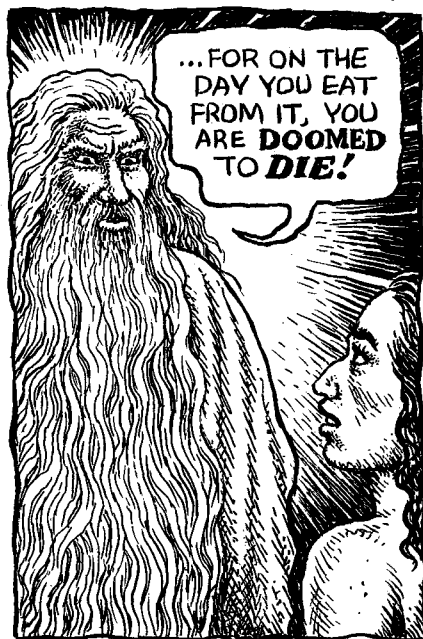
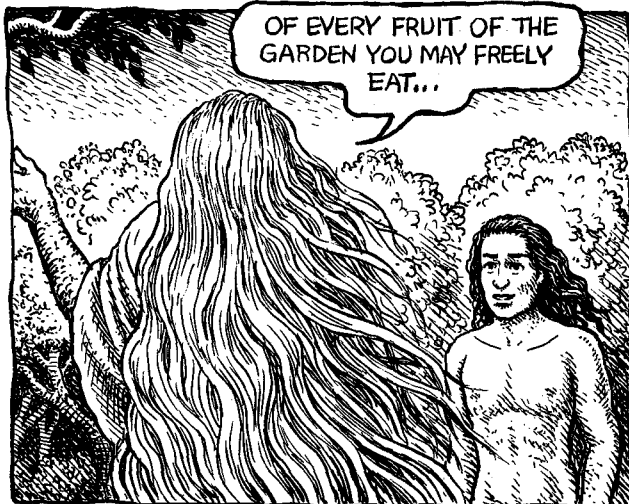
AND THE NAME OF THE SECOND RIVER IS GIHON, THE ONE THAT WINDS THROUGH THE WHOLE LAND OF CUSH.



AND THE NAME OF THE THIRD RIVER IS TIGRIS, THE ONE THAT GOES TO THE EAST OF ASHUR, AND THE FOURTH RIVER IS EUPHRATES.



AND THE LORD GOD TOOK THE MAN AND SET HIM DOWN IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, TO TILL IT AND TO WATCH OVER IT. AND THE LORD GOD COMMANDED THE MAN, SAYING...



AND THE LORD GOD FASHIONED THE RIB HE HAD TAKEN FROM THE MAN INTO A WOMAN, AND HE BROUGHT HER TO THE MAN.



AND THE MAN SAID...

THIS ONE AT LAST, BONE OF MY BONES, AND FLESH OF MY FLESH, THIS ONE SHALL BE CALLED WOMAN, FOR FROM MAN WAS THIS ONE TAKEN.



HENCE A MAN LEAVES HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND CLINGS TO HIS WIFE AND THEY BECOME ONE FLESH.



AND THE TWO OF THEM WERE NAKED, THE MAN AND HIS WOMAN, AND THEY WERE NOT ASHAMED.

Chapter 3

NOW THE SERPENT WAS THE MOST CUNNING OF ALL THE BEASTS THAT THE LORD GOD HAD MADE, AND HE SAID TO THE WOMAN...



EVEN THOUGH GOD SAID YOU SHALL NOT EAT FROM ANY TREE OF THE GARDEN—

AND THE WOMAN SAID TO THE SERPENT...

WE MAY EAT OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREES OF THE GARDEN, BUT OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GARDEN GOD HAS SAID, "YOU SHALL NOT EAT FROM IT AND YOU SHALL NOT TOUCH IT, OR YOU WILL DIE!"



AND THE SERPENT SAID
TO THE WOMAN...

YOU SHALL NOT
BE DOOMED TO DIE, FOR GOD
KNOWS THAT ON THE DAY YOU EAT
OF IT YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED,
AND YOU WILL BECOME AS DIVINE
BEINGS, KNOWING
GOOD AND
EVIL.



AND THE WOMAN SAW THAT THE TREE
WAS GOOD FOR EATING AND THAT IT WAS
LUST TO THE EYES AND LOVELY TO LOOK AT.



AND SHE TOOK OF ITS FRUIT
AND ATE...



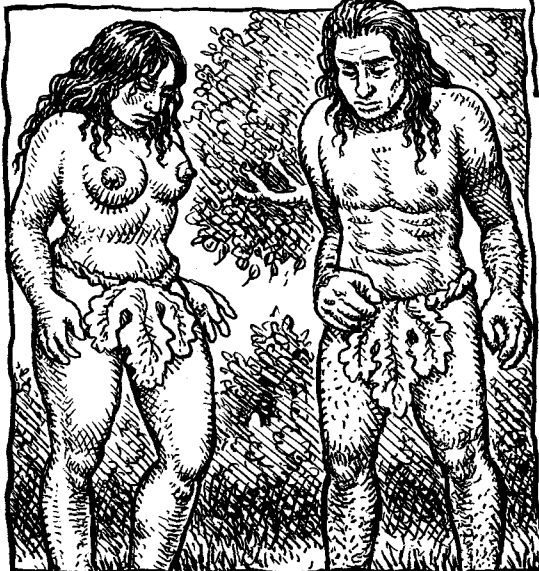
...AND SHE ALSO GAVE TO
HER MAN, AND HE ATE.



AND THE EYES OF THE TWO
WERE OPENED, AND THEY
KNEW THAT THEY WERE
NAKED.



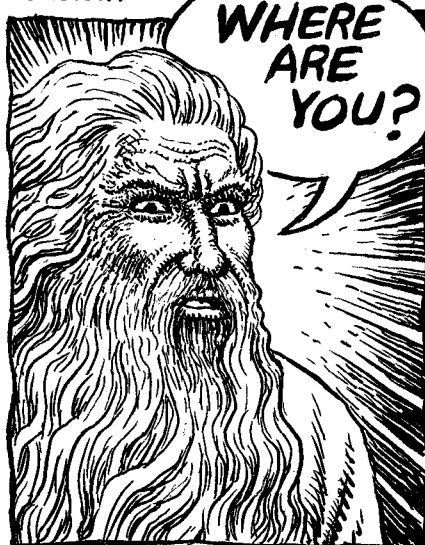
AND THEY SEWED FIG LEAVES AND
MADE THEMSELVES LOINCLOTHS.



AND THEY HEARD THE SOUND OF THE LORD GOD
WALKING ABOUT IN THE GARDEN IN THE EVENING
BREEZE, AND THE MAN AND HIS WOMAN HID
FROM THE LORD GOD IN THE MIDST OF THE
TREES OF THE GARDEN.



AND THE LORD GOD CALLED
TO THE MAN AND SAID TO
HIM...



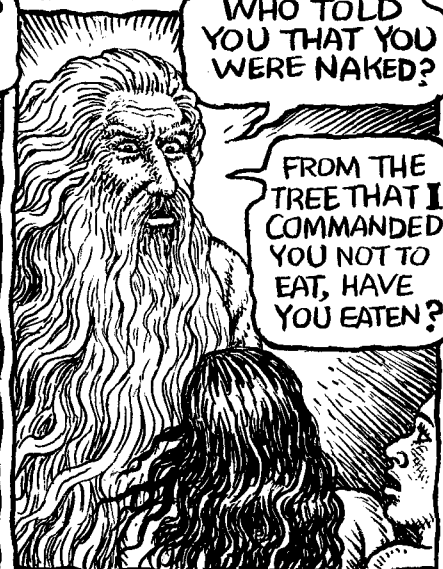
WHERE
ARE
YOU?

AND HE REPLIED...

I HEARD THE SOUND
OF YOU IN THE GARDEN,
AND I WAS AFRAID BE-
CAUSE I WAS NAKED,
AND I HID.



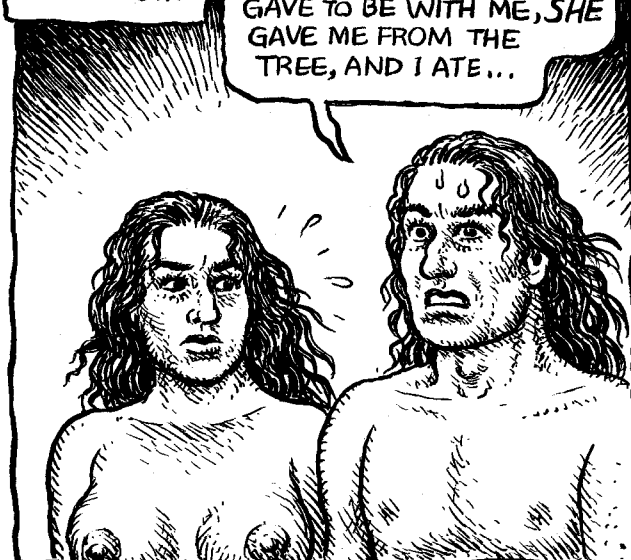
AND HE
SAID...



WHO TOLD
YOU THAT YOU
WERE NAKED?

FROM THE
TREE THAT I
COMMANDED
YOU NOT TO
EAT, HAVE
YOU EATEN?

AND THE
MAN SAID...



THE WOMAN WHOM YOU
GAVE TO BE WITH ME, SHE
GAVE ME FROM THE
TREE, AND I ATE...

AND THE LORD GOD SAID TO THE WOMAN...

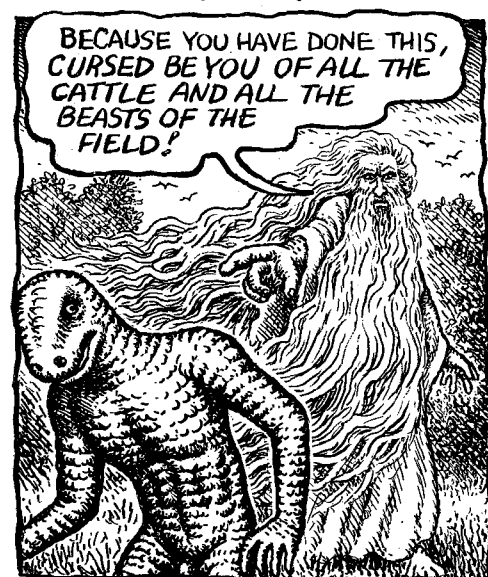
WHAT IS THIS YOU HAVE DONE?

AND THE
WOMAN SAID...



THE SERPENT
BEGUILED ME,
AND I ATE.

AND THE LORD GOD SAID
TO THE SERPENT...



BECAUSE YOU HAVE DONE THIS,
CURSED BE YOU OF ALL THE
CATTLE AND ALL THE
BEASTS OF THE
FIELD!

ON YOUR BELLY
SHALL YOU CRAWL
AND DIRT SHALL YOU
EAT ALL THE DAYS OF
YOUR LIFE! ENMITY
WILL I SET BETWEEN
YOU AND THE WOMAN,
AND BETWEEN YOUR
SEED AND HERS! HE
WILL TRAMPLE YOUR
HEAD, AND YOU WILL
BITE HIS HEEL!



TO THE WOMAN HE SAID...



I WILL TERRIBLY
SHARPEN YOUR BIRTH
PANGS! IN PAIN SHALL
YOU BEAR CHILDREN!
AND FOR YOUR MAN
SHALL BE YOUR LONGING,
AND HE SHALL RULE
OVER YOU!

AND TO ADAM HE SAID...

BECAUSE YOU LISTENED TO THE VOICE OF YOUR WIFE AND ATE FROM THE TREE OF WHICH I COMMANDED YOU, "YOU SHALL NOT EAT FROM IT," **CURSED BE THE GROUND BECAUSE OF YOU!**



IN SORROW YOU SHALL EAT FROM IT ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE! THORNS AND THISTLE SHALL IT SPROUT FOR YOU, AND YOU SHALL EAT THE GRASSES OF THE FIELD! BY THE SWEAT OF YOUR BROW SHALL YOU EAT BREAD, TILL YOU RETURN TO THE GROUND, FOR FROM THERE YOU WERE TAKEN!



FOR DUST YOU ARE, AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN!



AND ADAM CALLED HIS WIFE'S NAME EVE, FOR SHE WAS THE MOTHER OF ALL THE LIVING.



AND THE LORD GOD MADE COATS OF SKINS FOR THE MAN AND HIS WOMAN, AND HE CLOTHED THEM.



AND THE LORD GOD SAID...

NOW THAT THE MAN HAS BECOME LIKE ONE OF US, KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL, HE MAY REACH OUT AND TAKE AS WELL FROM THE TREE OF LIFE AND LIVE FOREVER!



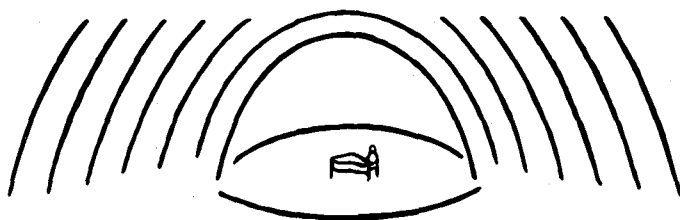
AND THE LORD GOD SENT HIM FORTH FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO TILL THE GROUND FROM WHICH HE HAD BEEN TAKEN.



AND HE DROVE THE MAN OUT, AND SET UP EAST OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN THE CHERUBIM AND THE FLAME OF THE WHIRLING SWORD TO GUARD THE WAY TO THE TREE OF LIFE.



THE CRITICS



ON TELEVISION

NAUGHTY NURSE

Showtime's new medical drama.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

The new Showtime series "Nurse Jackie," which begins on Monday, June 8th, after the premiere of the fifth season of "Weeds," marks the welcome return to TV of Edie Falco, starring as Jackie Peyton, an emergency-room nurse in a New York City hospital. You may remember Falco: she played the wife of a prosperous Italian-American in a long-running HBO drama. Whenever I saw Falco on talk shows during the eight-year run of "The Sopranos," she was surprisingly ill-humored in response to good-humored questions from the hosts about her fans' conflation of her with her character Carmela Soprano; she had no interest even in discussing the phenomenon, since, she said, it had nothing to do with her or with the work of acting. That kind of severity can be disappointing when you're watching someone on a talk show, failing to play along, but it's also refreshing and may, in fact, say something about the nature of Falco's talent. Actors have to be willing to burst fans' bubbles in order to move on; and fans have to let them do it.

Amazingly, as you watch "Nurse Jackie," even as you're seeing that familiar face and hearing that familiar tangy voice, your mind does release Falco from the Carmela associations, partly because she brings the same skills to the new role, making Jackie seem just as real as Carmela did. In both shows, Falco has had to convey the heated internal struggles of someone with a strong personality whose

role in life—Mob boss's wife, high-level nurse—requires her to both go along with and find ways to get around the built-in limits of her power. Falco is so good in "Nurse Jackie" that she may have to become annoyed all over again, when talk-show hosts ask her whether fans think she's an R.N. and want her to take care of them.

One thing we learn about Jackie right away is that she uses drugs to get through the day. She tells us this in a voice-over that opens the first episode; as we hear the theme song from "Valley of the Dolls" and watch, in a slow-motion, extreme-closeup sequence, pretty red pellets liberated from a capsule raining downward like some kind of dream-world candy, Jackie says, "Sixteen grains—no more, no less," adding, with self-conscious cheer, as if she were doing a TV commercial, "Just a little bump to get me up and running." She's sardonic and in control, briskly lining up the pellets with the edge of her hospital I.D. card and unceremoniously snorting them. The dopiness (literal and figurative) of the sequence gives way to the hecticness of the hospital—a bike messenger is rushed in on a stretcher after an accident, and the E.R. doctor, Fitch Cooper (Peter Facinelli, who might as well be called John Carter here, so uncannily does he resemble "E.R." 's Noah Wyle), disagrees with her recommended course of action. What follows is an illustration of something all nurses (and doctors and patients) know: there are times

when the nurse gets it right and the doctor gets it wrong, and the outcome is dire. But the scene does more than establish that "Nurse Jackie," which was created by Evan Dunsky, Liz Brixius, and Linda Wallem, "understands" nurses; it shows you all the little steps in the dance, the microdynamics of these intense situations involving life, death, and hierarchy (the three certainties of hospitals). Jackie's doing everything that needs to be done, and the patient is feeling cared for, but Dr. Cooper shoulders her aside without acknowledging it, and then bungles an attempt to help the patient sit up better. But the patient doesn't register any of this; the second the doctor walks into the room, Jackie becomes invisible.

Such moments aren't lingered over; the show, a well-paced half hour, moves along in the same way that Jackie's non-stop busy day does. The patient dies, and after doing a certain amount of agonizing Jackie rips the doctor apart for his failure to pay proper attention. Later still, deliberately but not showily, she pulls him aside to tell him that he's a good doctor and that he should jettison all the jokey and jerky maneuvers he uses to cover up his insecurity. This time, he listens. Jackie, in any event, finds a way to resolve her regret at not having tried harder to override Dr. Cooper, imposing a sort of vigilante justice behind the scenes. She has a habit of throwing the ethical rule book away, and the cascade of consequences is hugely entertaining and often unexpectedly funny—unless, that is, you're the woman-beating thug whose severed ear finds its way into her hands.

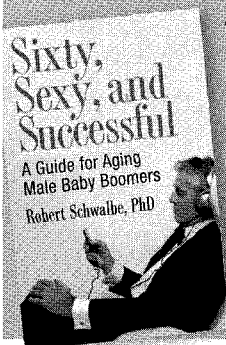
In addition to her routine work, Jackie is, on the day we meet her, given a first-year nursing student to supervise, a nervous, enthusiastic, talkative puppy named Zoey (Merritt Wever). Jackie wastes no time putting her in her place. After telling her point-blank to shut up, she says, "I don't like chatty. O.K.? I don't do chatty. I like quiet. Quiet and mean—those are my people." She also has to deal with her irritatingly punctilious administrator, Gloria Akalitus (Anna Deavere Smith). And she has to make time for her regular sex break with Eddie (Paul Schulze), the hospital pharmacist, who provides her with Oxycontin. And then there's lunch with her friend Eleanor O'Hara (Eve

Edie Falco returns to television as a tough-loving emergency-room nurse with a problem of her own.



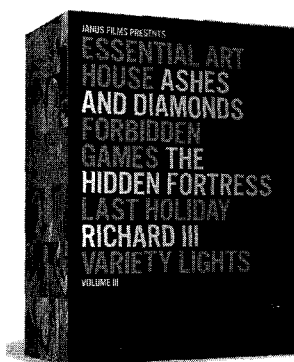
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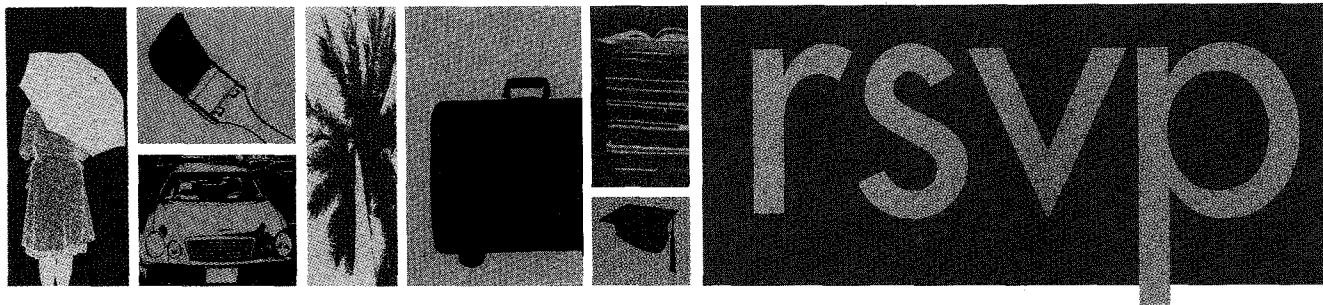
Best), a doctor at the hospital, who is meant to be Jackie's best friend. The bond is apparently based on their supreme competence, but that accounts only for a lack of contempt, not for the presence of affection. No matter how eager the creators of the show were to bust through the stereotype of doctors and nurses being at each other's throats (or in each other's scrubs), the friendship isn't plausible. Dr. O'Hara is an over-the-top shopper and egomaniac, with a parodic English accent (Best is English, playing "English"), and says things like "Swear to God, Jacks, the salespeople at Bergdorf are so foul they almost make me regret spending twelve hundred dollars on a scarf." The Jackie we've come to know by now—this line occurs in the third episode—would crush Dr. O'Hara up and toss her in the biohazard bin, or at least make fun of her for sounding as though she were auditioning for a show called "Ab Fab, M.D." (In other stereotype news, the two male nurses on the show are both gay.) The women do have one small scene together that is piercingly brilliant—sitting on a bench in a side corridor, getting ready to leave, they are talking about shoe sizes, when they hear a patient shrieking in agony and look down the hall to see her being wheeled along on her way to wherever. They have no expression on their faces, and within seconds they turn back to their own concerns. Jackie scratches her nose and says, "I need to eat something." "Me, too," Dr. O'Hara says. They're off duty, after all, a state of being that we resist thinking about when it comes to doctors and nurses, because it means that they love us only until their shift is over. Watching this throwaway scene feels like being punched in the stomach by God while your mother holds you down—it's existential humor at its finest.

With each episode, Jackie's relationship to drugs becomes a little clearer, and we realize that, as smart as she is, as good a nurse as she is, she's kidding herself, to some extent, about her addiction. She would call it self-medicating, as needed; we would call it dependency. What isn't clear—just as it shouldn't be, at least not yet—is what her drug use is all "about." She seems to need to abuse some substance in order to deal with every aspect of her life—something for midmorning, something for midafternoon, and something "for the long ride home"—even

though her life doesn't appear to be going too badly. She's good at her job; she has two daughters she adores; her husband, Kevin (Dominic Fumusa), owns a bar and loves his family. A closer look reveals seams. Jackie takes her wedding ring off before going to work; the sex with Eddie is joyless and might as well be anonymous, since he doesn't even know that she's married; and her younger daughter has started to have dark, obsessive thoughts—the girl's teacher tells Jackie and Kevin that she circles her desk three times before she sits down, "so the planes don't come out of the sky." Jackie responds to people—her patients, her kids—with warmth and snap, but the closeup shots of her betray the vulnerability in her big eyes, and in her tired face, which, to Falco's credit, she has allowed to be filmed in a way that does not mask how many years she's been alive.

Falco's winning performance is joined by two others: Deaveare Smith's, which comes as no surprise (watch her wave her finger at her employees as she warns them not to pharmaceutically help a former nurse die; it should win an Emmy for best supporting digit), and Merritt Wever's. Zoey flaps around, trying to please, inserting herself where she's not wanted, and is just touchingly, hilariously *young*. It's inconceivable that this performance won't send her career to the moon. Now, with apologies to Falco, a final bit of "Sopranos" housekeeping is in order. Paul Schulze—Eddie, the pharmacist—played Father Phil in "The Sopranos," the smarmy priest with whom Carmela had a romantic dalliance early in the series. (They didn't have sex; they just watched movies together.) Putting him in "Nurse Jackie" is a piece of truly whacked-out casting. Stupid *and* unfortunate: it's now been proved, not once but twice, that he and Falco don't have interesting chemistry onscreen; also, there are, oh, at least five or six other male actors in the United States, and surely one of them would have been happy to take the part.

Brixius said that she and her co-creators didn't want to follow the usual medical-drama formula, with "a nurse who rides shotgun to a doctor." The result, with its strong, complex, funny, flawed central character, feels truer to life than the zillions of one-dimensional (or no-dimensional) nurses on television. It's not just corrective medicine, though—it actually tastes good. ♦



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A CRITIC AT LARGE

SHOW OR TELL

Should creative writing be taught?

BY LOUIS MENAND

Creative-writing programs are designed on the theory that students who have never published a poem can teach other students who have never published a poem how to write a publishable poem. The fruit of the theory is the writing workshop, a combination of ritual scarring and twelve-on-one group therapy where aspiring writers offer their views of the efforts of other aspiring writers. People who take creative-writing workshops get course credit and can, ultimately, receive an academic degree in the subject; but a workshop is not a course in the normal sense—a scene of instruction in which some body of knowledge is transmitted by means of a curricular script. The workshop is a process, an unscripted performance space, a regime for forcing people to do two things that are fundamentally contrary to human nature: actually write stuff (as opposed to planning to write stuff very, very soon), and then sit there while strangers tear it apart. There is one person in the room, the instructor, who has (usually) published a poem. But workshop protocol requires the instructor to shepherd the discussion, not to lead it, and in any case the instructor is either a product of the same process—a person with an academic degree in creative writing—or a successful writer who has had no training as a teacher of anything, and who is probably grimly or jovially skeptical of the premise on which the whole enterprise is based: that creative writing is something that can be taught.

This skepticism is widely shared, and one way for creative-writing programs to handle it is simply to concede the point. The University of Iowa Writers' Workshop is the most renowned creative-writing program in the world. Sixteen Pulitzer Prize winners and three recent Poet Laureates are graduates of the program. But the school's official position is that the school had nothing to do with it. "The fact that the Workshop can claim as alumni nationally and internationally prominent poets, novelists, and short story writers is, we believe, more

the result of what they brought here than of what they gained from us," the Iowa Web site explains. Iowa merely admits people who are really good at writing; it puts them up for two years; and then, like the Wizard of Oz, it gives them a diploma. "We continue to look for the most promising talent in the country," the school says, "in our conviction that writing cannot be taught but that writers can be encouraged."

"A nice conviction if you can afford it" might be the response of faculty working in less prestigious programs, and not everyone who teaches creative writing agrees about the irrelevance of the job. Some writers do seem to make it a matter of principle to bite the hand that writes the checks. Allen Tate, the poet and critic, complained that "the academically certified Creative Writer goes out to teach Creative Writing, and produces other Creative Writers who are not writers, but who produce still other Creative Writers who are not writers." Tate ran the creative-writing program at Princeton, where John Berryman was a colleague. Kay Boyle once published a piece arguing that "all creative-writing programs ought to be abolished by law." She taught creative writing for sixteen years at San Francisco State.

Other writers, though, are very much with the program. John Barth taught for twenty-two years in the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins, one of the oldest and most luminous programs in the country. In 1985, he published an article in the *Times Book Review* entitled "Writing: Can It Be Taught?," to which his answer was that it emphatically can, mainly on the ground that it so emphatically is. (He added the standard "genius" exception: "Not even in America can one major in Towering Literary Artistry.")

A few writing instructors have changed their minds. When Barth wrote his piece for the *Times*, he might have been recalling a speech given three years earlier by one of the leading figures in the field, R. V. Cassill. Verlin Cassill was a novelist and

short-story writer who graduated from Iowa in 1939 and returned after the war to get an M.A. and to teach in the Writers' Workshop. One of his students was Margaret Walker, an African-American, who was the author of "Jubilee" (1966)—the first of the so-called neo-slave narratives, of which the most famous is Toni Morrison's "Beloved." ("Jubilee" was Walker's Ph.D.

fifteenth anniversary of the A.W.P. Cassill stunned the membership by suggesting that the organization should be disbanded. He thought that writers had become complicit in the academic logrolling and gamesmanship of publish-or-perish: using other people's money—grants from their universities and from arts agencies—they devised ways to get their own and one an-

active writing in the United States. Today, there are eight hundred and twenty-two. Thirty-seven of these award the Ph.D.

Mark McGurl doesn't mention Cassill's speech in his book about creative-writing programs and American fiction, "The Program Era" (Harvard; \$35), but it fits his argument per-



Before the program era: Robert Frost (second from left), the world's first writer-in-residence, at Bread Loaf.

thesis; for the project, Cassill made her read Henry James, who, in those days, was considered a universal "writer's writer," even for a woman writing a novel about slavery and Reconstruction.) Cassill wrote a standard textbook, "Writing Fiction"; he was the editor of "The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction," a position of power in the field; and, from 1966 until his retirement, in 1983, he taught creative writing at Brown, another program with a distinguished history. In 1967, shortly after arriving at Brown and just at the start of a boom in university-based creative-writing programs, he founded the Associated Writing Programs, the professional association of academic creative writers.

But at a convention in Boston on the

other's work into print, and then converted those publications into salary increments (which is apparently how Cassill thought that most professors operate). They wrote poems to get raises. The academic system was corrupting, and it was time for the writers to get out. "We are now at the point where writing programs are poisoning, and in turn we are being poisoned by, departments and institutions on which we have fastened them," he said. The speech got attention, but the A.W.P. did not disband. It eventually renamed itself the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, and it now has more than twenty-five thousand members. Around the time that Cassill delivered his renunciation, there were seventy-nine degree programs in cre-

fectly. The argument is that teaching creative writing should always be a scandal, since it's a scandal that suits everyone. It allows people in creative-writing departments to feel that, unlike their colleagues in the traditional academic disciplines, they are not cogs in a knowledge machine; and it allows the university to regard itself as what McGurl calls a "difference engine," devoted to producing original people as well as original research. He points out that teachers in creative-writing programs were asking "Can it be taught?" right from the start, but that virtually no one has ever tried to lay down rules for what should go on in the classroom. This is because not having an answer to the

"Can it be taught?" question—keeping alive the belief that all this training and socialization never really touches the heart of the imaginative process—is what marks creative-writing programs as "creative." Academic creative-writing programs are, as McGurl puts it, examples of "the institutionalization of anti-institutionality." That's why institutions love them. They are the outside contained on the inside.

Still, the creative-writing program, unsystematic or even anti-system as it might believe itself to be, is a system. People go in at one end and they come out the other, bearing (like the Scarecrow) a piece of paper with a Latin inscription, but also bearing (unlike the Scarecrow) the impress of an institutional experience. The nature of that experience mutates as the folk wisdom of the workshop mutates—from "Show, don't tell," which was the mantra in the nineteen-forties and fifties, to the effectively opposite mantra "Find your voice," which took over in the nineteen-sixties and seventies. McGurl suggests that these mantras encode shifting patterns of cultural assumptions—about identity, about work, about gender and class, and, of course, about what counts as good writing—and that they have had a big effect on the stories and novels that American writers have produced. "The rise of the creative-writing program," he says, "stands as the most important event in postwar American literary history."

McGurl's book is not a history of creative-writing programs. It's a history of twentieth-century fiction, in which the work of American writers from Thomas Wolfe to Bharati Mukherjee is read as reflections of, and reflections on, the educational system through which so many writers now pass. (McGurl doesn't deal with poetry.) As McGurl points out, the university is where most serious fiction writers have been produced since the Second World War. It has also been the place where most serious fiction readers are produced: they are taught how to read in departments of literature. McGurl's claim is simple: given that most of the fiction that Americans write and read is processed through the higher-education system, we ought to pay some attention to the way the system affects the outcome.

This may sound like a formula for debunking, but it's not. "The Program Era" is an impressive and imaginative book. It does three things unusually well. First, it interprets works of fiction as what philosophers of language call illocutionary acts. The meaning of one of Raymond Carver's stories is not only what the story says; it's also the way the story says it. The form of a Carver short story—ostentatiously brief, emotionally hyper-defended—expresses something. McGurl thinks that the style represents the "aestheticization of shame, a mode of self-retraction." Literary minimalism

like Carver's—McGurl calls it "lower-middle-class modernism"—is a means of reducing the risk of embarrassing oneself, and is one way that students from working-class backgrounds, like Carver (he was from Oregon, where his father was a sawmill worker), deal with the highbrow world of the academy.

Rather ingeniously, McGurl reads the work of Carver's exact contemporary Joyce Carol Oates as an expression of the same class-based self-consciousness. (He notes that Carver once called Oates the most important writer of his generation.) Oates is a prolific practitioner of what McGurl calls "maximalist" fiction: it has been said that, at one point in her career, she wrote forty pages of fiction every day, or about a quarter of what would constitute an entire book for Carver. But McGurl thinks that maximalism, too, is "a way of shielding oneself with words." The two styles are methods of self-protection and, at the same time, forms of self-assertion: the minimalist writer puts his craft on display, the maximalist his facility.

Carver and Oates are both program products. Oates is from a poor family—she once described herself as "of peasant stock"—in upstate New York. She came out of the undergraduate creative-writing program at Syracuse, where she studied with Donald Dike, and she has spent most of her career teaching at Princeton, where Morrison, until her recent retirement, was also on the faculty. In Carver's case, the career constitutes a virtual *tour d'horizon* of the creative-writing scene. Carver started as a correspondence student in an outfit known as the Palmer Institute of Authorship. He took classes at Chico State, in California, with the novelist John Gardner; at Humboldt State College, with the short-story writer Richard Cortez Day; at Sacramento State College, with the poet Dennis Schmitz; and at Stanford, where he was a Wallace Stegner Fellow; and he taught at the Iowa Writers' Workshop with John Cheever. His second marriage was to another creative-writing professional, the poet Tess Gallagher, and he ended up as a professor at Oates's alma mater, Syracuse, where Jay McInerney was his student. The beat goes on—McGurl's point.

A second thing that "The Program Era" does well, and sometimes entertainingly, is to treat the world of creative



"I'm sorry, Ma'am, but you'll have to put your dust jacket back on."

writing as an ant farm, in which the writer-ants go about busily executing the tasks they have been programmed for. Writing is a technology, after all, and there is a sense in which human beings who write can be thought of as writing machines. They get toolled in certain ways, and the creative-writing program is a means of tooling. But McGurl treats creative writing as an ant farm where the ants are extremely interesting. He never reduces writers to unthinking products of a system. They are thinking products of a system. After all, few activities make people more self-conscious than participating in a writing workshop. Reflecting on yourself—your experience, your “voice,” your background, your talent or lack of it—is what writing workshops make people do.

McGurl thinks that this habit of self-observation is not restricted to writing programs. He thinks that we’re all highly self-conscious ants, because that’s what it means to be a modern person. Constant self-assessment and self-reflection are part of our program. (McGurl uses the term “reflexive modernity.” There is a lot of critical techno-speak in “The Program Era,” it’s true. There are also flow charts and the like, diagrams suited to systems analysis. If you don’t enjoy this sort of thing, you will not get very far into the book. It’s worth learning to enjoy, though.)

So the fiction that comes out of creative-writing programs may appeal to readers because it rehearses topics—“Who am I?” issues—that are already part of their inner lives. And contemporary fiction does have many readers. McGurl argues that, far from homogenizing literature or turning it into an academic exercise, creative-writing programs have been a success on purely literary grounds. “There has been a system-wide rise in the excellence of American literature in the postwar period,” he says, and he offers the same proof that Barth offered in his *Times* article: there is more good fiction out there than anyone has time to read. The system must be doing something right.

The third accomplishment of “The Program Era” is almost inadvertent. Changes in creative-writing programs are influenced by changes in two related bodies of thought, both of which try to answer the question “How can we make people more productive and more creative?” These

are the philosophy of education and management theory. Creative-writing courses follow naturally from the “learning by doing” theories of progressive education: they add practical, hands-on experience to traditional book learning. And, as McGurl suggests, presenting a story in a writing workshop is a little like making a business presentation in a corporate workplace. Such a presentation is, on some level, what he calls “a presentation of individual excellence,” a means by which we observe and test ourselves. It helps us measure how we’re doing in the human race.

The unexpected result of combining a history of creative fiction writing with a history of education and management theory is a kind of slide show of postwar American life. “The Program Era” evokes a sense of how life felt in the nineteen-sixties, when Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters took their bus trip (a writers’ workshop on the road), and a sense of how life felt in the nineteen-seventies, when Carver was writing his bleak little stories. And this helps McGurl to make a larger point, which is that university creative-writing programs don’t isolate writers from the world. On the contrary, university creative-writing courses situate writers in the world that most of their readers inhabit—the world of mass higher education and the white-collar workplace. Sticking writers in a garret would isolate them. Putting them in the ivory tower puts them in touch with real life.

Is the rise of the creative-writing workshop, as McGurl claims, “the most important event in postwar American literary history”? Creative-writing courses did not suddenly spring into being in 1945. A course called Verse Making was available at Iowa in 1897, and from 1906 to 1925 George Pierce Baker taught a drama workshop at Harvard, the first graduate writing course in the country; Thomas Wolfe took it. The term (and the concept) “creative writing” dates from the nineteen-twenties, which is when Middlebury started the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, where Robert Frost served as the world’s first writer-in-residence. In 1936, Iowa launched the Writers’ Workshop—officially, the Program in Creative Writ-

ing—under the direction of Wilbur Schramm, and began awarding the first M.F.A.s. In 1941, Schramm was replaced by Paul Engle, a prodigious creative-writing proselytizer and cultural Cold Warrior, who made Iowa into a global power in the field. Engle eventually brought writers from seventy countries to study at Iowa.

There was a surge in creative-writing degree programs after the Second World War. The Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins started in 1947; Stanford inaugurated its writing fellowships the same year; Cornell’s creative-writing program opened in 1948. As is the case with most new developments in higher education, changes in funding were responsible.

Title II of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944—the G.I. Bill—provided forty-eight months of tuition for veterans who enrolled in colleges and universities. More than two million veterans, a much bigger number than anticipated, took up the offer, and by 1950 the government had spent more money on tuition and other college costs than on the Marshall Plan. The key requirement of Title II was that the tuition assistance be used only for study in degree or certificate programs, which is why creative-writing courses grew into degree-granting creative-writing programs.

In the nineteen-sixties, the universe of higher education underwent a fantastic expansion. Between 1960 and 1969, enrollments doubled and more professors were hired than had been hired in the entire previous three hundred and twenty-five years. Most of the growth was in the public sector. At the height of the expansion, between 1965 and 1972, new community-college campuses were opening in the United States at the rate of one every week. A way for institutions to raise their academic profiles was to add graduate programs. (Once added, they became virtually impossible to subtract. This is one reason that there is an oversupply of Ph.D.s in the United States.) By 1975, there were fifteen creative-writing M.F.A. programs in the country. Today, there are a hundred and fifty-three. Creative-writing programs attract students (good for public universities, where enrollment may determine budgets), but, contrary to what many people assume,



they are not generally cash cows. Most of the top programs—until recently, Columbia was the major exception—provide fellowship support for all their students, and the classes are tiny. In 2005–06, only four-tenths of one per cent of all master's degrees awarded were in creative writing.

The identification of certain writers with university creative-writing programs is, therefore, a postwar phenomenon. The list is long: John Hawkes (Brown), Guy Davenport (Kentucky), Robert Coover (Brown), Reynolds Price (Duke), Wallace Stegner (Stanford), Leslie Epstein (Boston University), Donald Barthelme (Houston), Tobias Wolff (Syracuse), E. L. Doctorow (New York University), William Kennedy (SUNY Albany), Robert Olen Butler (Florida State University). And many writers who are not normally imagined in an academic setting have circulated through the creative-writing system. Philip Roth has taught at several universities, including Iowa and Princeton. Kurt Vonnegut and Nelson Algren both taught at Iowa. (Algren claimed to find writing programs worthless. He later complained, in a piece called "At Play in the Fields of Hackademe," that "what it lacks in creativity, the Iowa Creative Workshop makes up in quietivity." He is reported to have lost a lot of money playing poker while he was in Iowa City.)

And it is remarkable how many fiction writers have come through university writing programs since the war—not just individual writers but entire cohorts. When Vonnegut was at Iowa, he taught a class that included John Casey, Gail Godwin, Andre Dubus, and John Irving. Ken Kesey, Robert Stone, Wendell Berry, Larry McMurtry, Ernest Gaines ("The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman"), and Tillie Olsen were all in a creative-writing workshop at Stanford at the same time. Michael Chabon, Alice Sebold, and Richard Ford (a student of Doctorow, before Doctorow went to N.Y.U.) are products of the program at the University of California at Irvine. Susan Minot, Rick Moody, Tama Janowitz, and Mona Simpson all went to Columbia.

The absorption of fiction writing into the university has a lot to do with the emergence of robust traditions (as opposed to scattered works) of so-called multicultural literature. As

McGurl notes, virtually all the major figures in Latino literature have been American academics. The same is true of Asian-American novelists, many of whom have held university appointments, and of Native American writers. N. Scott Momaday was a student of Stegner's at Stanford, which is where he began work on his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, "House Made of Dawn" (1968).

These writers have a special relation to the "outside contained on the inside" feature of academic creative-writing programs, and many of the most celebrated have been accused of inauthenticity. McGurl tells the story of the attack on Momaday's "House Made of Dawn" by Karl Kroeber. Kroeber is not a Native American; he is a professor of English at Columbia whose many interests include Native American literature, and he criticized Momaday for attempting to "evoke an 'Indianness' for his readers (the majority of whom will presumably not be Indians) through an Anglo-American literary structure that must prohibit any authentically Indian imaginative form." Native American literature can be taught in a university, in other words, but Native American literature should not be written in a university.

Authenticity is a snark—although someone will always go hunting for it. McGurl's response to Kroeber is sensible: since Momaday is a Native American, and since he developed his literary style by studying white modernist writers at Stanford and other universities, "rather than being contaminated by modernism, Indian art now *includes* modernism as one of its elements." As McGurl points out, the horses that the Plains Indians rode when they hunted, so picturesquely, the buffalo were European imports.

And though some readers are devoted to fiction about ethnic minorities because it tells "their story," there is a degree to which such literature is for outsiders, a variety of anthropology in which natives "inform" on their own cultures to literary tourists. The rest of the natives are often not thrilled to find their practices paraded before the gaze of outsiders. "To celebrate one's family to the maximum, to put them proudly and visibly into print, might require betraying them to the eyes of an alien observer we might call 'America,'" as McGurl puts it. "Port-

noy's Complaint" is a case in point. All literature about an ethnic minority by members of that ethnic minority is, potentially, a *shanda fur die goyim*. More striking is that writing of this kind coming out of creative-writing programs today is the subject matter of literature and ethnic-studies departments tomorrow. Universities have become restaurants that bake their own bread.

The creative-writing program is an American invention, and it has recently become an American export. The British were at first contemptuous of the idea of creative-writing courses; they regarded them, as the critic and novelist Malcolm Bradbury once put it, as being "like the hamburger—a vulgar hybrid which, as everyone once knew, no sensible person would ever eat." The first British master's-degree program in creative writing opened in 1970. Bradbury and Angus Wilson set it up. (Bradbury taught Ian McEwan.) The first undergraduate degree program was not instituted until 1991. But the vulgar hybrid has spread. McGurl reports that there are now writing programs in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Israel, Mexico, South Korea, and the Philippines.

Still, the rise of creative-writing programs does not explain everything about postwar fiction, and there are some obvious limitations to McGurl's argument, which he tends to acknowledge in the abstract but to ignore in the particular analysis. Plenty of postwar writers, from J. D. Salinger and Vladimir Nabokov to Thomas Pynchon, had little or nothing to do with writing programs. (Nabokov taught a course on the novel at Cornell, in which Pynchon was a student, but he never taught creative writing. Harvard once considered hiring Nabokov to teach literature; Roman Jakobson, then a professor of linguistics there, is supposed to have asked whether the university was also prepared to hire an elephant to teach zoology.)

Writers are products of educational systems, but stories are products of magazine editorial practices and novels are products of publishing houses. Carver's minimalism was shaped by his editor, Gordon Lish, whom he met in Palo Alto in the nineteen-sixties. As an editor at *Esquire* and Knopf, Lish (who attended Andover) put a highly identifiable impress on American fiction, some of

it by writers of lower-middle-class origin and some not. Robert Gottlieb, at Simon & Schuster, Knopf, and *The New Yorker*, surely had as much influence on the fiction that was written and published in the postwar period as anyone who taught at Iowa or Stanford.

McGurl is not interested in the effects of individual teachers and editors, though; he's interested in the effects of systems. But magazines can be regarded as systems for processing fiction. And writers who have moved in and out of the institutions of journalism during their careers—Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Joan Didion, Tom Wolfe—reflect the experience in their fiction. Their novels are often staged either as a privileged type of reporting, writing that is somehow both faithful to and superior to the canons of traditional journalism, or as dramatizations of the emptied-out subjectivity of the reporter persona—the fly on the wall, the view from nowhere.

Most readers of “The Program Era” are likely to be persuaded that the creative-writing-program experience has had an effect on many American fiction writers. Does this mean that creative writing can, in fact, be taught? What is usually said is that you can't teach inspiration, but you can teach craft. What counted as craft for James, though, was very different from what counted as craft for Hemingway. What counts as craft for Ann Beattie (who teaches at the University of Virginia) must be different from what counts as craft for Jonathan Safran Foer (who teaches at N.Y.U.). There is no “craft of fiction” as such.

And, even on the level of “just getting people to write,” different writers, when confronted with the blank page, have different modes of attack. “Revise!” is the war cry of all writing classes. David Morley's advice in “The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing” (2007) represents the orthodoxy: “Write any sort of rubbish that covers the outlines of what you intend: the plot outline; character sketches; description; a hackneyed sestina. Begin by freewriting and free-associating sentences until some patterns emerge that begin to intrigue you solely for the sound they make, their rustle of possibility.” It's a method that generates copy for a class to chew on, but writing that way is like throwing a

lot of bricks on a pile and then being asked to organize them into a house. Surely the goal should be to get people to learn to think *while* they're writing, not after they have written.

No one seems to agree on what the goal of good writing is, anyway. Stegner was an Iowa product, possibly the first person ever to receive a degree in creative writing. He founded the program at Stanford by persuading a wealthy oilman to fund a place where returning veterans who wanted to write could get away from their families and hang out. Stegner believed that the purpose of writing was to give readers what he called an “intense acquaintance” with the author. “The work of art is not a gem, as some schools of criticism would insist, but truly a lens,” he explained in an essay published in 1950. “We look through it for the purified and honestly offered spirit of the artist.”

John Gardner, another workshop legend and Iowa graduate, took a different view of the business. He believed in what he called a “fictional dream,” a vivid, continuous, and believable alternate reality. His book “The Art of Fiction,” published posthumously in 1983 (he died in a motorcycle accident

in 1982), concludes with a list of writing exercises, such as:

2. Take a simple event: A man gets off a bus, trips, looks around in embarrassment, and sees a woman smiling. . . . Describe this event, using the same characters and elements of setting, in five completely different ways.

4b. Describe a lake as seen by a young man who has just committed murder. Do not mention the murder.

4c. Describe a landscape as seen by a bird. Do not mention the bird.

27. Using all you know, write a short story about an animal—for instance, a cow.

No doubt Gardner had success with this method of instruction, but the exercises have nothing to do with establishing an “intense acquaintance.” They are about acquiring a knack for adopting different styles and assuming different points of view. And for many writers writing is a job, or a way to escape from oneself. Those writers would not be happy in a Stegner workshop.

On the other hand, Gardner was a flamboyant and intensely personal teacher. His preferred pedagogical venue was the cocktail party, where he would station himself in the kitchen, near the ice trays,



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and consume vodka by the bottle while holding forth to the gathered disciples. Stegner, on the other hand, hated informality and disruption. He quit Stanford after students in the nineteen-sixties insisted on lying on the floor, and he resented the fact that he was famous for having been the teacher of Ken Kesey. Personality is a job requirement for the workshop teacher, and it doesn't matter what sort. Teachers are the books that students read most closely, and this is especially true in the case of teachers who are living models for exactly what the student aspires one day to be—a published writer.

Writing teachers may therefore cultivate their own legends. Once, on the first day of class, Angela Carter, who taught at Brown, was asked by a student what her own writing was like. She carefully answered as follows: "My work cuts like a steel blade at the base of a man's penis." The course turned out not to be oversubscribed. One of Rick Moody's teachers at Columbia asked the class to indicate, by a show of hands, how many found Moody's work boring. Donald Barthelme, at Houston, assigned students to buy a bottle of wine and stay up all night drinking it while producing an imitation of John Ashbery's "Three Poems." Lish taught private writing classes that lasted from six to ten hours, a little like est training. He had students read their stories aloud to the group, and would order them to stop as soon as he disliked what he was hearing. Many students never got past the first sentence.

All scenes of instruction contain the potential for transference, and the workshop format seems almost deliberately designed for it. Writing instructors have techniques for stimulating production, exercises for developing an awareness of how literature works, formulas encapsulating their particular notions of craft. But the path of transmission cannot be smooth. "I could write nothing that pleased Lowell," Philip Levine complained about a workshop that he had taken with Robert Lowell at Iowa. "Arbitrary, petty, and cruel" is the way one of Lowell's students at Harvard described him. The writing instructor's arbitrariness is like the psychoanalyst's silence: the blander the screen, the more elusive the approval, the harder students will work to be recognized.

For, in spite of all the reasons that they shouldn't, workshops work. I wrote poetry in college, and I was in a lot of workshops. I was a pretty untalented poet, but I was in a class with some very talented ones, including Garrett Hongo, who later directed the creative-writing program at the University of Oregon, and Brenda Hillman, who teaches in the M.F.A. program at St. Mary's College, in California. Our teacher was a kind of Southern California Beat named Dick Barnes, a sly and wonderful poet who also taught medieval and Renaissance literature, and who could present well the great stone face of the hard-to-please. I'm sure that our undergraduate exchanges were callow enough, but my friends and I lived for poetry. We read the little magazines—*Kayak* and *Big Table* and *Lillabulero*—and we thought that discovering a new poet or a new poem was the most exciting thing in the world. When you are nineteen years old, it can be.

Did I engage in self-observation and other acts of modernist reflexivity? Not much. Was I concerned about belonging to an outside contained on the inside? I don't think it ever occurred to me. I just thought that this stuff mattered more than anything else, and being around other people who felt the same way, in a setting where all we were required to do was to talk about each other's poems, seemed like a great place to be. I don't think the workshops taught me too much about craft, but they did teach me about the importance of making things, not just reading things. You care about things that you make, and that makes it easier to care about things that other people make.

And if students, however inexperienced and ignorant they may be, care about the same things, they do learn from each other. I stopped writing poetry after I graduated, and I never published a poem—which places me with the majority of people who have taken a creative-writing class. But I'm sure that the experience of being caught up in this small and fragile enterprise, contemporary poetry, among other people who were caught up in it, too, affected choices I made in life long after I left college. I wouldn't trade it for anything. ♦

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BRIEFLY NOTED

Beach Reads

Nobody Move, by Denis Johnson (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; \$23). So noir it's almost pitch-black, this follow-up to Johnson's National Book Award-winning "Tree of Smoke" concerns a lovable loser named Luntz—barbershop-chorus member, Hawaiian-shirt wearer, and inveterate gambler—who is in debt to an underworld bad guy. "My idea of a health trip is switching to menthols and getting a tan," he tells Anita Desilvera, a beautiful Native American woman whom he beds after a boozy night out, and who has bad guys of her own to escape. Against a desolate Western background of shantytowns and trailer parks, the pair's story plays out largely according to the genre's dictates, with wisecrack-laden dialogue and evenly dispersed cliffhangers that are a legacy of the work's genesis as a serialization in *Playboy*. But there are also moments of arresting lyrical beauty—a river's swollen surface under a crescent moon "resembled the unquiet belly of a living thing you could step onto and walk across."

Dark Places, by Gillian Flynn (Shaye Areheart; \$24). Libby Day, the protagonist of Flynn's disturbing second novel, was, as a seven-year-old, the only survivor of her family's brutal murder by her older brother, an event dubbed by the media the "Satan Sacrifice of Kinnakee, Kansas." Twenty-five years later, she has become a hardened, selfish young woman with no friends or family. Since the tragedy, her life has been paid for by donations of well-wishers, but, with that fund now empty, Libby must find a way to make money. Her search leads her to The Kill Club, a secret society of people obsessed with the details of notorious murders. As Libby tries to gather arti-

facts to sell to The Kill Club (whose members, it turns out, doubt the guilt of her brother), she is forced to reexamine the events of the night of the murder. Flynn's well-paced story deftly shows the fallibility of memory and the lies a child tells herself to get through a trauma.

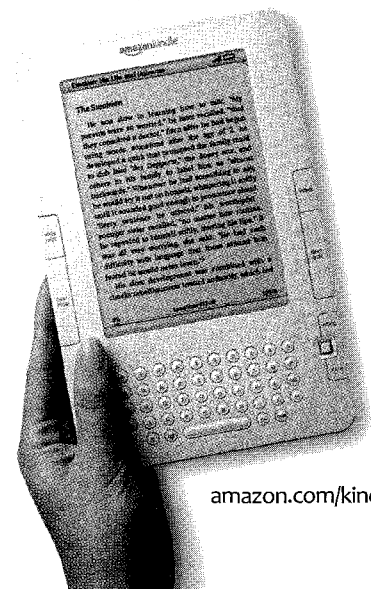
Admission, by Jean Hanff Korelitz (Grand Central; \$24.99). Portia Nathan is a thirty-eight-year-old admissions officer at Princeton University, a place so discriminating that it can afford to turn down applicants who are "excellent in all of the ordinary ways"—"Olympic athletes, authors of legitimately published books, Siemens prize winners, working film or Broadway actors, International Tchaikovsky Competition violinists." Portia compares her job to "building a better fruit basket" and achieves career success by helping her institution pluck the most exotic specimens, but her personal life is permanently on hold because of a traumatic incident from her own college years that she has never come to terms with. Although the reader may unravel the mystery of Portia's past before the plot does, the novel gleams with acute insights into what most consider a deeply mysterious process.

The Long Fall, by Walter Mosley (Riverhead; \$25.95). Leonid McGill, the black private eye at the center of Mosley's latest novel, is compellingly conflicted. A red-diaper baby and ex-boxer who lives a luxe New York life after years of shady work as a fixer for the Mob, he is a bruiser and a brooder, intent on getting his life straight, or, at least, straighter. But the missing-persons case into which he plunges unfolds with a hiccupping rhythm, and includes digressive forays into backstory that never quite coalesce into a proper Chanderesque labyrinth. And, while Mosley clearly hopes to use McGill to explore race relations in the age of Obama, the sense of specific time and place that is so engrossing in his Los Angeles novels is sadly lacking.

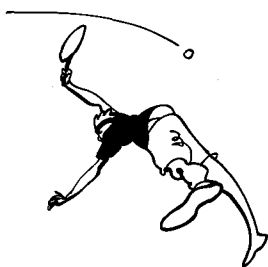
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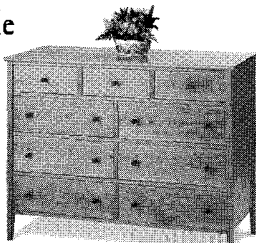
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POP MUSIC

SERENDIPITY

Hypnotic Brass Ensemble's sturdy family business.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

The first time I encountered the Hypnotic Brass Ensemble, I was walking through the Times Square subway station toward the No. 1 train. It was hard to miss the sound of eight men playing brass instruments—two trombones, four trumpets, one sousaphone, and a euphonium—while a ninth man added drums. The men stood side by side, swaying, looking a bit like James Brown's Famous Flames. As I listened, the sousaphone player locked in with the drummer, the trombones played what sounded like a bass line, and the rest of the horns circled and echoed the main motif. Certain genres sprang to mind—a New Orleans second-line band, say, or big-band jazz—but the music wasn't jazz, exactly. The songs set small, compact melodies against a steady hip-hop beat, and everyone played simultaneously and continuously. The band had eliminated one of the dreary commonplaces of jazz, that class-recital rhythm of soloing—you go, I go, and so on, until the main melody returns.

Several months later, I saw the band again, in front of the Whole Foods in Union Square. As I snapped a few photographs, mostly to remind myself to figure out who they were, one of the trombone players walked up to me. "You can't take a picture unless you buy a CD," he said, smiling. He held out three albums in slimline cases, each titled "Hypnotic Brass Ensemble" and featuring an identical black-and-white photograph of the band, beneath a field of color—one red, one orange, and one green. I bought all three (ten bucks apiece), and the trombone player slapped me on the back. "Support live music, people," he called out, stepping in line with his bandmates. "Bring back real music before it's too late."

With the exception of the drummer, Gabriel Wallace, the members of Hypnotic are all brothers. Their father is the jazz trumpeter Kelan Phil Cohran, who was a leading figure in Chicago's black avant-garde-jazz community in the fifties

and sixties, and was a member of the Sun Ra Arkestra. In the spring of 1965, Cohran and about forty other musicians gathered in his living room on Chicago's South Side to form the A.A.C.M. (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), a nonprofit that supports black artistic expression in local communities. "We had lived through the greatest decline of pro-



The music that Hypnotic Brass Ensemble plays.

fessional musicians in Chicago and wanted to do something about it," Cohran says. Some of the best-known members of the A.A.C.M. include the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Anthony Braxton, and the Pharaohs, whose members eventually formed Earth, Wind, and Fire.

The brothers in Hypnotic come from two different mothers, both of whom sang with Cohran in a band called the Circle of Sound. Gabriel (trumpet), Tycho (sousaphone), Amal (trumpet), and Uttama (euphonium) are the sons of Maia Hubert; Saiph (trombone), Jafar (trumpet), Seba (trombone), and Tarik (trumpet) are the sons of Aquilla Sadalla Graves. The boys all grew up in the same house, along with several of their older siblings. (The brothers are members of an extended family of

twenty-three children.) Cohran routinely woke the boys at 5 A.M. so that they could practice playing horns before school. At first, he had them play just the mouthpieces—once they'd achieved "purity in their tone," they graduated to full instruments. Under the name Phil Cohran Youth Ensemble, the brothers performed live with their father at various local events. "Kwanzaa celebrations, fairs, anything involving black consciousness and community togetherness," Cohran said.

In early 1996, Cohran's twenty-year-old son, Anthony, was shot and killed in his apartment near the University of Illinois, where he was a student. His brothers, some of whom had left Chicago for colleges in other cities, were drawn back home. "It shook 'em up," Cohran said. "If

you want to point to something where the group came together and started writing together, that was it." Anthony had wanted them all to make a living from their music—to "take it from a hustle to a business," as Saiph told me—and now they were determined to make something work. At the time, the brothers were writing lyrics and beats for a nine-man rap band called Wolf Pak. One day, Saiph went downtown to hear Tycho, Seba, Jafar, and Tarik playing horns on the street. It sparked something. "I thought, Wow," he said. "I know these were my brothers, but I hadn't heard us play in a long time." One by one, the older brothers abandoned their rap efforts and joined their younger siblings. By the early aughts, Hypnotic Brass Ensemble was playing colleges and clubs,



PABLO LOBATO

ight best be described as highly composed instrumental hip-hop: accomplished, energetic songs designed for dancing.

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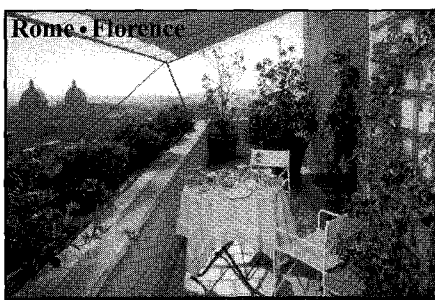


MICHELLE WILES IN "SYLVIA," PHOTO BY FABRIZIO FERRI

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and the brothers were supporting themselves as musicians. According to Saiph, they could make about two thousand dollars for six hours on the street. He also says that, over the course of several years of touring the United States and Europe, the band sold about three hundred thousand copies of its first record (the orange one, sometimes called "Flipside," after the fifth track), entirely through self-promotion. "We were just dealing with small manufacturers around Chicago, getting, like, a thousand at a time, selling them out, getting another thousand," Saiph told me. "Then we started ordering five thousand at a time. It just kind of crept up on us."

The music that Hypnotic plays might best be described as highly composed instrumental hip-hop. If it is jazz, it's closer in spirit to jazz from a hundred years ago: accomplished and energetic music parcelled out in short songs designed for dancing. It stays in key for long stretches, and moves in easy-to-follow periods. In a typical Hypnotic song, the shifts in key and the emergence of themes happen against a sound of massed horn parts that provide a sense of solidity. The music stays rooted to the cycle of the beat and the riff, and the players don't leave the center behind to leap around as they might in hard bop or free jazz. Unlike the musicians in the avant-garde community that Hypnotic grew up in, these players have no interest in dissonance or "out" passages of squeaking and skronking. They keep their compositions lean and their harmonies broad and varied.

A few years ago, the band played a street show on Portobello Road in London, within earshot of a man named Alan Scholefield, who owns a nearby record store called Honest Jon's. He also runs a record label called Honest Jon's, with Damon Albarn (of Gorillaz, and of the nineties Britpop band Blur). They enlisted the band for collaborative work, including a session with the legendary Afrobeat drummer Tony Allen. In 2008, Albarn gave Hypnotic the use of his London studio to make a record for the label.

That album, also self-titled, is a compilation of sorts—it features rerecorded versions of songs from Hypnotic's self-released CDs, plus "Rabbit Hop," a song by the eccentric New York composer Moon-dog, and "Alyo," a composition by their father. In most cases, the new recordings

are an improvement. "Ballicki Bone," a song from the band's second album (the green one), was originally a somewhat sluggish mid-tempo showcase for stately trumpet lines. The new version features a quicker pace and harder drumming, and better reflects the tightly organized unit that Hypnotic has become. Only the gorgeous "Jupiter" has lost a little of its cosmic charm. There is no drumming on the original—just a faint noise like a shekere that was recorded and then eliminated but is leaking through the headphones of the band members. The horns float in and around each other, and the absence of drums lends the song an airiness that serves such a disciplined group well. The Honest Jon's version adds a slow, rimshot backbeat that doesn't anchor the song so much as weigh it down.

The sonic palette afforded by eight horns is unique but naturally limited, and the recorded medium can sometimes emphasize the sameness. A street performance grants Hypnotic's music a sense of serendipity that is lost on a recording. How do you capture the feeling of accidentally hearing great live music? For Hypnotic, it might not matter: the band has absorbed the biggest electronic music of the last century (hip-hop), filtered it through America's century-old classic music (jazz), and made it portable.

The brothers moved to the New York area around 2005, settling first in Queens, then in Westchester, and now sharing two apartments in Brooklyn. They plan to move to London next. Over the past few years, Hypnotic has turned down offers from several major labels, including Def Jam and Atlantic, though they have also cannily maintained ties to well-known artists. (They have recorded with Maxwell and Erykah Badu and have a collaboration forthcoming with Mos Def.) "Our plan was always to sell a million albums and then start our own label," Saiph explained. As the brothers see it, their father never cashed in on his talent, so they've had to make sure that he would approve of the way they are handling the business side of theirs. "He's our No. 1 critic," Saiph told me. "Every time he hears us, he lets us know, like, 'Wow, y'all knockin' me back.'" ♦

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Sasha Frere-Jones's pop-music blog.

ENDLESS MAHLER

A symphonic marathon, at Carnegie.

BY ALEX ROSS



In a hundred years, there will be great folk festivals devoted to my symphonies, in gigantic halls seating twenty to thirty thousand people," Gustav Mahler once told the soprano Lilli Lehmann. He said those words more than a century ago, and although the Mahler stadium tour has yet to materialize, the composer was correct in surmising that audiences of the future would find his immense creations irresistible. With each passing year, Mahler seems to tighten his hold on the public. Consider what happened across North America on a weekend in the middle of May. The MahlerFest in Boulder, Colorado, an annual gathering, concluded with a performance of the Eighth Symphony. The Richmond Symphony assayed the Ninth. The Second was taken up simultaneously by the Austin Symphony, the Florida Orchestra, and the

Rainier Symphony, in Seattle. The Knoxville Symphony presented the Fifth, the Winnipeg Symphony the Sixth. And at Carnegie Hall, where Mahler conducted the New York Philharmonic in his final years, the Staatskapelle Berlin, under the joint direction of Daniel Barenboim and Pierre Boulez, concluded a whirlwind, ten-concert survey of Mahler's symphonic works and orchestral songs. All told, many thousands of concertgoers heard Mahler's music in the space of a few days—enough, perhaps, to fill a stadium. Once widely dismissed as an egomaniacal pasticheur, Mahler has become a pillar of the repertoire.

His appeal is at once visceral and intellectual. On one level, he is the supreme magician of orchestral spectacle, the master of the oh-my-God moment. Neuroscientists have analyzed the phenomenon

of the "musical chill"—the ambiguous tremor of otherness that runs through the body when, for whatever reason, a particular sound overwhelms the reasoning mind. Mahler generated chills by the dozen: the pianissimo, misterioso entry of the chorus in the "Resurrection"; the huge orchestral chord that blazes forth in the spacious slow movement of the Fourth; the "hammer-blow" percussion in the finale of the Sixth, which crushes hopes for a major-key resolution. Mahler's chills often arise from collisions between music and noise, music and silence. They imitate the sublimity of nature—eruptions, thunderclaps, the roar of waterfalls—and thereby trigger an instinctive shiver of awe and fear.

Yet Mahler is also an ironist, a deconstructionist, a highly cerebral composer. On one manuscript of the Rondo-Burleske, the savagely sardonic Scherzo of the Ninth, he wrote the dedication "To my brothers in Apollo," mocking the idea of a musical fraternity. Sometimes he withdraws from the fray and engages in private discourse—as in the passage, at the end of the first movement of the Ninth, where a flute and a horn meander along fitfully intersecting paths, enacting the musical equivalent of a Beckett dialogue. Boulez, in his essay "Mahler Today," sums up Mahler's music as follows: "By deciding to accept all eventualities and potentials of being, it becomes truly philosophical.... Music for contemplation, a book of meditation." Tellingly, the Carnegie festival began and ended with quiet sounds: oboe and horn plaintively calling out in the first of the "Kindertotenlieder," violas sighing and dying at the end of the Ninth. Mahler's symphonies function both as orations delivered to a crowd and as intimate messages sent to solitary souls. They are love letters to the human race.

The trouble with putting on a gigantic Mahler festival is that some unlucky musicians have to play all the music. The composer made cruel demands on his performers; each symphony is a marathon in itself. The idea of having one orchestra race through *der ganze Mahler*—the nine finished symphonies, the Adagio of the incomplete Tenth, the symphonic song cycle "Das Lied von der Erde," and most of the orchestral songs—is on some level foolhardy. Barenboim, the music

Gustav Mahler, with his daughter Anna, in Toblach, Austria, 1909.

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director of the Staatskapelle Berlin, is prone to such stuntlike feats; in 2002, he led the ten mature operas of Richard Wagner—including the entire “Ring”—in two weeks. In the first few concerts at Carnegie, the Staatskapelle exhibited symptoms of fatigue: murky ensemble in the strings, raw notes in the winds, dozens of flubs in the brass. A similar disease broke out at Lincoln Center two years ago, when Valery Gergiev force-marched his Maryinsky Theatre orchestra through back-to-back cycles of the “Ring.”

The first third of the Carnegie series also suffered from the fact that neither conductor demonstrates unconditional love for the omnivorous musical language of Mahler’s early years—that unruly mélange of military marches, church chorales, kitschy serenades, inebriated waltzes, rustic horn calls. Born Mahlerians like Michael Tilson Thomas and Riccardo Chailly affectionately characterize such episodes; Barenboim and Boulez finesse them. It fell to Boulez to lead the Second, the Third, and the Fourth on consecutive nights, and in the ambulatory folkish sections he often seemed to be neutrally beating time, waiting for the next incursion of interesting timbres. On the other hand, Boulez may simply have been holding things together under adverse performance conditions. At the age of eighty-four, he retains an unfaltering command of rhythm and an uncanny sensitivity to orchestral balances. His portion of the cycle took off in the finale of the Third, which became a translucent vision akin to Wagner’s Good Friday music. Barenboim’s First sometimes surged with passion, sometimes sputtered. The performance was outclassed, both in beauty of sound and in urgency of interpretation, by the New York Philharmonic’s rendition of the First the same week, with Alan Gilbert conducting.

Barenboim’s contributions were only partly successful thereafter. The Fifth barrelled along effectively but often sounded crude; his Seventh, hobbled by dragging tempos, never really got off the ground. “Das Lied von der Erde,” with Michelle DeYoung and Klaus Florian Vogt as soloists, was polished yet strangely detached. (DeYoung was the vocal stalwart of the series, singing the mezzo solos in the Second and the Third with true pitch and grainy intensity. Dorothea Röschmann, Thomas Hampson, and

Thomas Quasthoff delivered the shorter song cycles.) Boulez came to the rescue with potent readings of the Sixth and the Eighth. His mastery of the Sixth was no surprise; the symphony has long been one of his specialties. In many conductors’ hands, the tragic final movement becomes overbearing, its plunges from ecstasy to angst losing novelty with repetition. Boulez solved that problem with a few tasteful adjustments to the score; in the hectic passage leading up to the second hammer blow, where Mahler indicates a “somewhat measured” tempo, Boulez kept to a rapid pace, so that instead of slouching toward apocalypse we seem to drive off a cliff. More surprising was his fiery account of the Eighth. One might have expected the éminence grise of European modernism to disdain this masterpiece of late-Romantic pomp, but Boulez has apparently developed a fondness for the work, his attention to detail sharpening certain grandly bustling passages that can sound like official memos from the Gesamtkunstwerk Corporation.

Finally came the monumental, confessional Ninth, under Barenboim’s direction. A mildly festive mood developed in the hall, despite the extreme seriousness of the music. Aficionados rendered their final judgments. Alec Baldwin, our leading celebrity Mahlerite, was in attendance. In the tense pause between the Rondo-Burleske and the final Adagio, there was an odd occurrence: a woman noisily burst through a door near the stage; announced, in a loud voice, “My name’s Marilyn Mahler”; and took her seat, creating no further disturbance. Barenboim, after seeming to be only intermittently engaged in earlier installments of the marathon, finally came to life, his choices of tempo dictated by logic rather than whim. The Berliners, perhaps liberated by the approach of the finish line, played with disciplined fury; the strings supplied a rumbling fullness of tone that had been missing on previous nights. The crowd held its breath for the Adagissimo coda—a whisper of love at the edge of the grave. ♦

NEATEST TRICK OF THE WEEK

Headline in the Great Falls (Mont.) Tribune.

ECONOMIC SLUMP HAS MORE OWNERS TURNING PETS INTO SHELTER

PORTRAIT OF THE WRITER

Tennessee Williams looks back in love.

BY HILTON ALS

Born in Mississippi in 1911, Thomas Lanier Williams III—and his older sister, Rose—grew up, like many children they knew of their race and class, under the watchful eye of a black nurse. The woman, Ozzie, was, according to young Tom, “almost invisible to anyone but our little cabalistic circle of three.” Tom (who changed his name to Tennessee in 1938) always remembered Ozzie; her kindness, a counterpart to his parents’ narcissism, deeply influenced his relationship to blackness. “Rose is fond of the blacks, as I am, perhaps because of our devotion to our beautiful black nurse Ozzie,” Williams wrote, somewhat awkwardly, in his 1975 “Memoirs.” Rose, of course, was the long shadow that loomed over the Williams clan. She was lobotomized, in 1943, in part to quiet her violent sexual fantasies, and Williams supported her for the rest of his life. In a sense, he also acted out her “craziness” for her: he became an artist—and not only that but a gay artist who was sexually and emotionally attracted to racial difference.

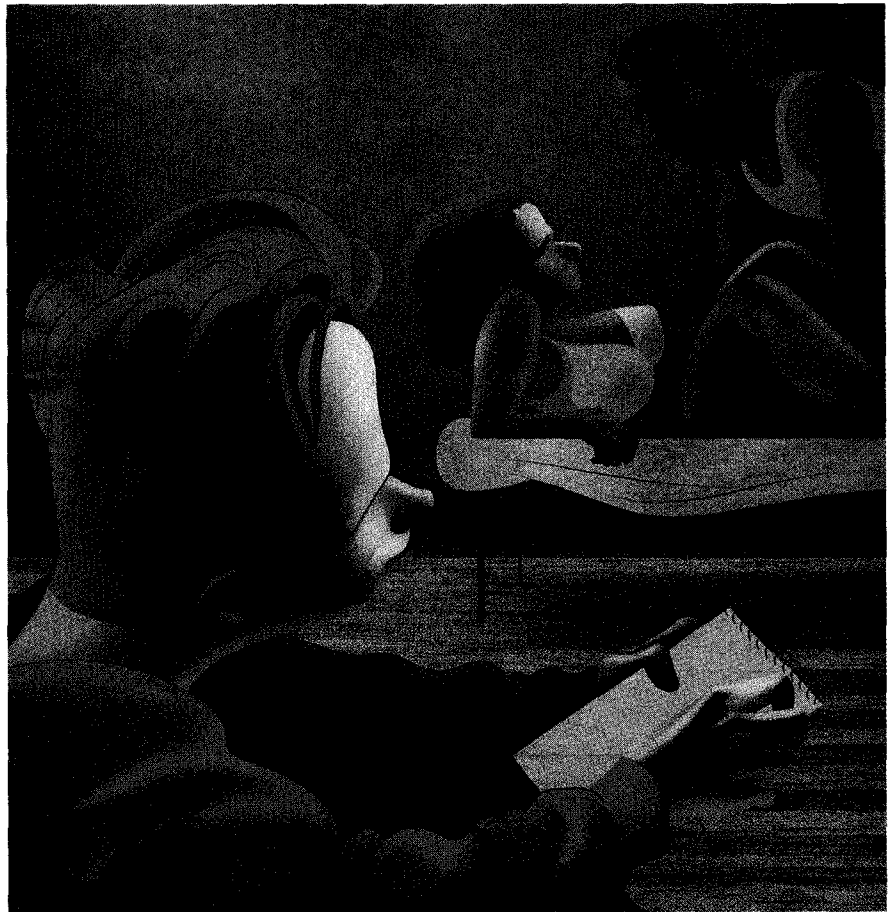
Throughout his career, Williams wrote about blackness in a variety of ways, especially in his fiction. Pathos, madness, emotional strain, and naked need shape and pierce his stories about race, such as the early “Big Black: A Mississippi Idyll” and his still shocking tale of sadomasochism, “Desire and the Black Masseur,” in which a mild-mannered white office worker encourages his black masseur to devour him—literally. In 1973, Williams published a ribald tale, “Miss Coynte of Greene,” in which a white spinster takes a variety of lovers, one of whom becomes momentarily threatening when she realizes, as she puts it, “Mr. Jones, you are not completely Caucasian!” Two years later, Williams published his second and final novel, “Moise and the World of Reason,” which, in many ways, is his least hysterical evocation of his interest in the erotics of difference. The narrator, a young white writer, details his abiding love for a black ice-skater named Lance, who eventually

dies, but not before passing on some of the wisdom of his personal experience.

In “Vieux Carré” (at the Pearl), which was first produced six years before he died, at seventy-one, Williams returns to the territory of his youth. Ozzie—here called Nursie (the great Claudia Robinson)—is, despite her relative reticence, central to the story. Reading the script before seeing

understand that “Vieux Carré” is fundamentally the author’s attempt to attach language to his inchoate feelings.

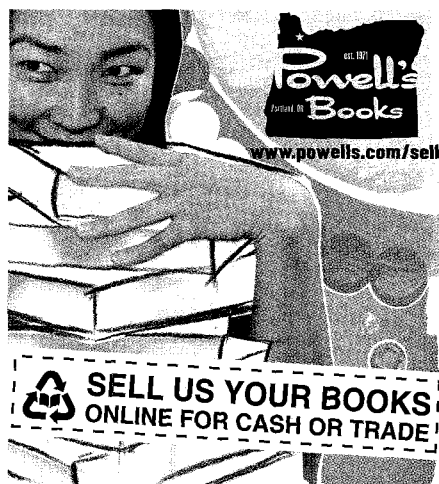
Williams was in his sixties when he finished writing the play, but “Vieux Carré” feels like the work of a young author on the verge of greatness. Among its many admirable qualities is Williams’s passion for his characters’ inner lives, which he enjoys exhibiting through their humor. Nursie works for Mrs. Wire (the perfectly cast Carol Schultz), who runs a boarding house at 722 Toulouse Street, in the Vieux Carré section of New Orleans. (The address is that of Williams’s first home in the French Quarter.) The play is set months before the start of the Second World War, but Williams avoids global politics. Like his first hit,



Sean McNall, as the Writer, observing his future characters in “Vieux Carré.”

the beautiful revival (directed, with great feeling, by Austin Pendleton), one might be put off by Williams’s regressive stage directions (“Nursie sits at the table with a cup of chicory coffee, eyes large and ominously dark as the continent of her race”), but it’s a measure of Robinson’s skill as a performer that she is able to ignore Williams’s hackneyed reductivism and to

“The Glass Menagerie,” “Vieux Carré” is a memory play, narrated, in this case, by a character called, simply, the Writer (Sean McNall). The Writer has little intellectual curiosity, little interest in pursuing anything as cold and remote as abstract reasoning. Rather, he is fascinated by the hermeticism of his own world—the *sound* of it, the juicy flow of ornate words in a



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town full of French, Celtic, and African locations. When, at the beginning of the play, Nursie confronts the tightfisted Mrs. Wire—who won't replace the burned-out light bulbs in the house—with "What you got against light? First thing God said on the first day of creation was 'Let there be light,'" you can almost feel Williams rumbling with the excitement of where this talk will take him and his characters:

MRS. WIRE: You heard him say that?
NURSIE: You never read the Scriptures.
MRS. WIRE: Why should I bother to read 'em with you quotin' 'em to me like a female preacher. Book say this, say that, makes me sick of the book.

In a sense, Nursie and Mrs. Wire are married: they define each other—and the Other. As a couple, they represent the tension and the familiarity between the black and white Southern women who lived together, sometimes despising their co-dependence, in the pre-civil-rights era. That Nursie says less than her employer is correct: she can go only so far in expressing her annoyance. Where Mrs. Wire has a tendency to alienate her lodgers, Nursie heals their wounds—not obsequiously but out of a true understanding of how hurt feels.

We meet most of the other characters as they enter 722 Toulouse. (Mrs. Wire has set up her bed by the front door.) Although there are only six boarders, they are so full of talk that it seems as if there were more going on than there actually is. Pendleton does nothing to discourage the flurry of activity, which falls momentarily still when, breaking the fourth wall, the Writer speaks directly to the audience. (Pendleton's staging is like the best choreography: graphic and clear.) Of all the characters, the Writer has been given the least interesting language; he's a little bland. (McNall does what he can with the part; his eyes sparkle with lust when he sits at his typewriter.) But this recessiveness seems dramaturgically appropriate. Nothing "happens" in "Vieux Carré," but it happens against the scrim of the Writer's mind. The play is his sentimental education—and ours.

Before the Writer hitches a ride with a young musician who's going West (the bright Christian Pedersen), we're given a glimpse into the other boarders' lives—and into Williams's source material. The young lovers, Jane and Tye (Rachel Botchan and Joseph Collins), are clearly based on the same people as Stella and

Stanley in "A Streetcar Named Desire." Two elderly women named Mary Maude and Miss Carrie (the extraordinary Beth Dixon and Pamela Payton-Wright) are familiar from Williams's one-acts.

But the character who engages us for the longest period of time is Williams himself—that is, his older self. Here he's called the Nightingale (movingly played by George Morfogen), and is an openly gay quick-sketch artist, rueful and warm, like Hannah Jelkes, another down-on-her-luck portraitist, in Williams's last Broadway hit, "The Night of the Iguana" (1960). The Nightingale is sad, predatory, alone, and dying of consumption, but he wants to live through the youth around him—or, more specifically, through the young Writer. The Nightingale sits on the edge of the Writer's bed and listens as he mourns his much beloved grandmother. It's like watching Williams's younger and older selves communicate. The scene is also about the failure of one artist and the unself-conscious, protean power of the other. The Writer will be remembered, while the Nightingale will not. Still, he wants to make his mark—as a lover. He quiets the Writer's hysterics and tries to inspire in him what Blanche Dubois called "the opposite" of death:

NIGHTINGALE (*giving a comforting pat*): Well, losses must be accepted and survived. How strange it is that we've occupied these adjoining rooms for about three weeks now and have just barely said hello to each other when passing on the stairs. You have interesting eyes.

WRITER: In what way do you mean?
NIGHTINGALE: Isn't the pupil of the left one a little bit lighter?

WRITER: ... I'm afraid I'm ... developing a—cataract in that eye.

NIGHTINGALE: That's not possible for a kid.
WRITER: I am twenty-eight.

NIGHTINGALE: What I meant is, your face is still youthful as your vulnerable nature, they go—together. Of course, I'd see an oculist if you suspect there's a cataract.

WRITER: I plan to when I ... if I ... can ever afford to. ... The vision in that eye's getting cloudy.

NIGHTINGALE: Don't wait till you can afford to. Go straight away and don't receive the bill.

WRITER: I couldn't do that.
NIGHTINGALE: Don't be so honest in this dishonest world.

One senses that the Nightingale's warning falls on deaf ears. The Writer intends to be an artist; his goal is not only to remain honest in a dishonest world but to evoke it as powerfully as possible. In black and white. ♦

THE WANDERERS

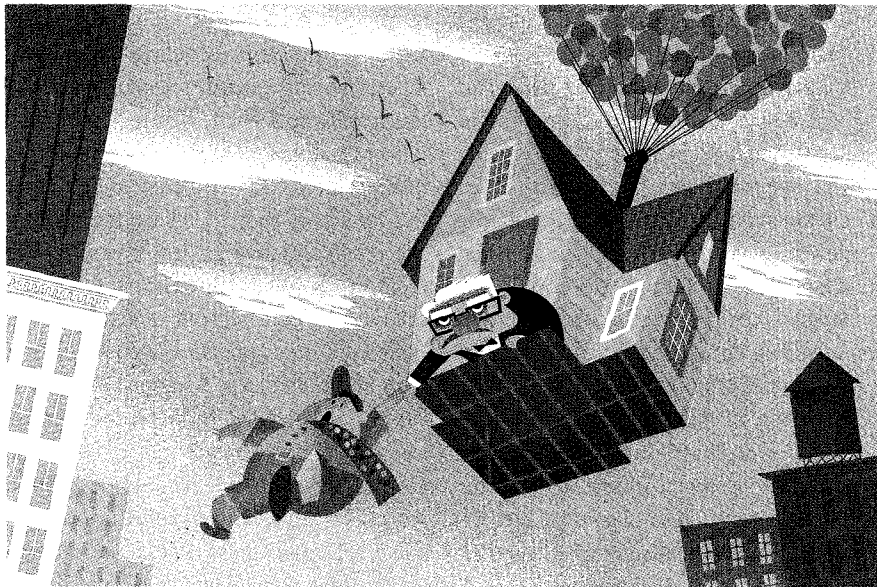
"Up," "Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian," and "Away We Go."

BY DAVID DENBY

The recent animated features by the Pixar division of Disney—"The Incredibles," "Ratatouille," "WALL-E," and now "Up"—have amounted to a run of creative success that has few parallels in American popular culture. Yes, there was the classic Disney group of animated features, released between 1937 and 1942, which included "Snow White and the

Seven Dwarfs," "Pinocchio," "Bambi," and "Dumbo." Children still love them, though this aging child doesn't, really. The old Disney dispensation went roughly as follows: The material was largely based on fairy tales, with princes and queens and wicked stepmothers. Animals with long eyelashes engaged in gentle woodland conversation. There was much anthropomorphic charm, much sweet melodiousness, and, running through the sugar, a vinegary taste of fear, separation, punishment. The entire Bruno Bettelheim catalogue of psychological terrors churned below the surface. By now (for me, at least), the cloyingness, with its malevolent undertones, seems too calculated and heavy-spirited. But the recent Pixar films are something else.

These movies are fashioned as much for adults as for kids. Set in the modern world, they are built around an exhilarating drive for achievement. A family of libertarian superheroes refuses to accept enforced mediocrity ("The Incredibles"). A talented rat wants to practice the art of cooking ("Ratatouille"). A robot saves the aesthetic remnants of a civilization ru-



A longing for adventure motivates the new animated feature from Pixar.

he imagines the newsreel narrator describing his walk home, turning his stepping over a crack in the sidewalk into a vault over a canyon. It's a gracious moment: the co-directors, Pete Docter and Bob Peterson, who also wrote the screenplay, pay affectionate tribute to daydreaming as a noble and necessary human activity. In dreams begin responsibilities, and in dreams begin movies, too.

A little tomboy, Ellie (Elie Docter, Pete's daughter), bursts into Carl's world, and, in a rapid, wordless montage, we see their long life together—wedded bliss and also, painfully, the slow extinction of many hopes, including a desire that they, too, will have great adventures in South America. The marital sequence is one of the most moving animated episodes ever made. It's like looking through a family photo album and knowing that every picture represents a crucial moment of experience. The doll-like figures only increase the pathos—Ellie, seen deep within the frame, becomes smaller and more and more bent as she sweeps their little house. When she dies, the elderly Carl, now known as Mr. Frederikson (Ed Asner), is left with nothing but a scrapbook, called "My Big Adventure," which she kept when she was young. Grouchy and cut off—the filmmakers based his snarl and snap on that of a George Booth old guy—he pretends to be more decrepit than he is. When he gets pushed too far, however, he revolts, attaching thousands of helium balloons to his house, which is about to be demolished, and heads, at last, for South America. The house takes off, but with an unwanted stowaway—a chubby little round-faced Wilderness Explorer in shorts, Russell (Jordan Nagai), a version of the youthful Carl. But this boy doesn't need to dream; he just acts, rolling into trouble. The never-achieved adventure begins. Carl will renew his ties with his dead wife and embrace the child they never had.

"Up" is being distributed in both 2-D and 3-D formats. The third dimension lends the characters palpability. Carl has a square, blocky head and a blocky body; the boy has a circular face with a bump for a nose. Neither of them is very big, but they look solid, weighted. When they reach South America, they immediately stumble upon the legendary bird—a gorgeous fantasia of purple and red, with an enormous beak and the flexibility of an

ined by excess and pollution ("WALL-E"). Some of the characters are isolated; they are all intelligent and strongly motivated. We've gone from psychological fable to moral fable, from fate to something like self-willed, even civic, passion.

"Up," which begins in the nineteen-thirties, is steeped in the style of that period, with its gee-whiz appreciation of exotic adventure and its worship of heroes who have journeyed to strange, distant places. A little boy, Carl, watches newsreels at a theatre, and sees an explorer, Charles Muntz (Christopher Plummer), first celebrated then humiliated: no one believes the skeleton of a large flightless bird that Muntz has brought back from South America is authentic. When Carl leaves the theatre,

Olympic gymnast. It turns out that Muntz has been there for years, hiding out near a gigantic waterfall, trying to catch the creature so that he can restore his reputation. He is aided by a pack of dogs, with thick, damp jowls and snouts. Except for one or two shots, however, Docter and Peterson never exploit the obvious 3-D opportunity of fangs snapping in the viewer's face. Their use of the technology is relatively chaste; they're not particularly eager to shock us. They keep their eyes on the story, and on the bond that develops between Carl and Russell. For the filmmakers, 3-D is a narrative tool, which works only if what it is enhancing is strong to begin with. After chases and spills and much scurrying over bare mountain buttes, an intricate fight unfolds in the sky. On one side are Carl and Russell, held aloft in Carl's house; on the other, Muntz, commanding an enormous dirigible. Russell falls out of the house and winds up clinging to some balloons, and, as he swings from one place to another, you can feel the air around him. Airiness has become a medium to pass through, not just dead space. Animation may be the perfect place for 3-D.

The movie is packed with lovely jokes, some of them funny in inexplicable ways. The dogs have been outfitted with little collars that turn their thoughts into words. When Russell reaches down and flips a switch on one collar, a dog starts talking in Japanese, or Swahili. He flips the switch again, and the animal speaks at squeaky double speed, like a cartoon chipmunk. The odd surprises never stop. Muntz, at the helm of his dirigible, is suddenly transfixed by an odd, screeching sound—it's Russell, hanging on to his balloons and dragging his sneakers across the large

windows of the airship. The moment is held for what feels like ten seconds. That annoying, rubber-on-glass screech, a homely sound in the midst of the wildest fantasy, brings us back to the genius of the filmmakers. For all their mad inventions, they never quite leave the world behind.

Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian is what my mother would have called a *kakabarity*—a large, foaming broth into which she emptied the forlorn and highly miscellaneous contents of her icebox. The plot of this family comedy is nominal; it's barely a premise. Ben Stiller is back with his beloved stuffed and wax figures and other statues, miniatures, and artifacts—only not at the American Museum of Natural History this time but in the basement of the Smithsonian complex (which includes a mockup of the National Gallery), where they have been shipped. After dark, the figures come to life, and the result is pretty much a free-form traffic jam in which everyone fights everyone else. There are a few fine touches in the chaos: some of the paintings spill out of their frames; statues of cherubim fly about; and Stiller and Amy Adams (playing a ready-for-anything Amelia Earhart in red curls) jump into the famous Alfred Eisenstaedt photograph of a sailor kissing a nurse on V-J Day and find themselves in a period black-and-white movie. The scene doesn't mean much of anything, but it's a handsome piece of magic. The great Hank Azaria also deserves praise, as a wannabe pharaoh, Kahmunrah. Powerful arms emerging from his battle dress, Azaria, channelling Boris Karloff, speaks in a prissy, vaguely English accent, and with a lisp. Kahmunrah is an exception-

ally huffy wannabe. When people insist on calling his war costume a dress, he becomes agitated. "It's a tunic," Azaria says, irritably shaking his fly-whisk sceptre, or *nekhakha*. "Tunic."

The British director Sam Mendes ("American Beauty," "Road to Perdition," "Revolutionary Road") has at times trapped his American characters in visual and moral schemes that hampered their freedom. In "Away We Go," working with a loose and colloquial script written by the husband-and-wife novelists Dave Eggers and Vendela Vida, he has gone in the opposite direction: Mendes now seems to be happily searching for the country's idiosyncrasies rather than for its archetypes. The structure is open-ended, ruminative, rumpled almost, in the manner of a road movie from the nineteen-seventies. An intelligent young couple, Verona (Maya Rudolph) and Burt (John Krasinski), who are about to have their first baby, don't quite know who they are or what they want, so they travel around visiting friends and relatives, many of whom have children. Some of the episodes are ripely satirical, others almost heartbreaking. Allison Janney appears as a coarse drunk who taunts her kids; Maggie Gyllenhaal is a pushy New Age mom whose aggressive virtue saps the strength of everyone around her. The movie could be called a search for an ideal of parenthood, and also for a place that the two wanderers, exhausted but increasingly sure of themselves, can call home. ♦

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The Front Row, a blog about movies.

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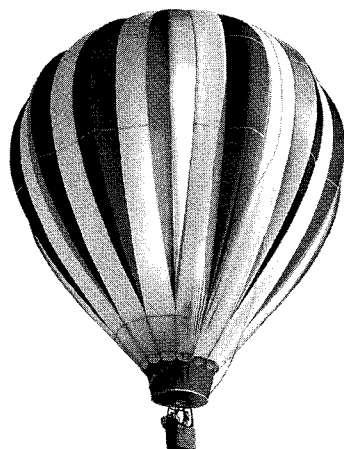
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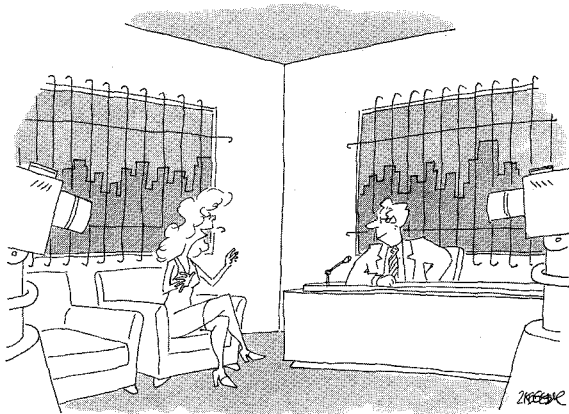
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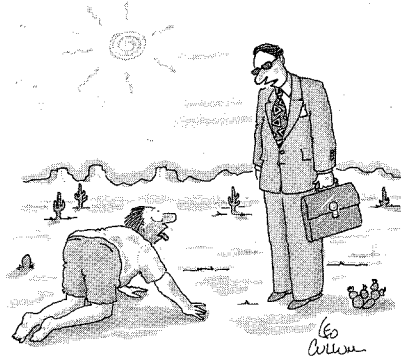
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Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Paul Noth, must be received by Sunday, June 14th. Finalists in the May 25th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 29th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Both the movie and I will be released this summer."
Lawrence Wood, Chicago, Ill.



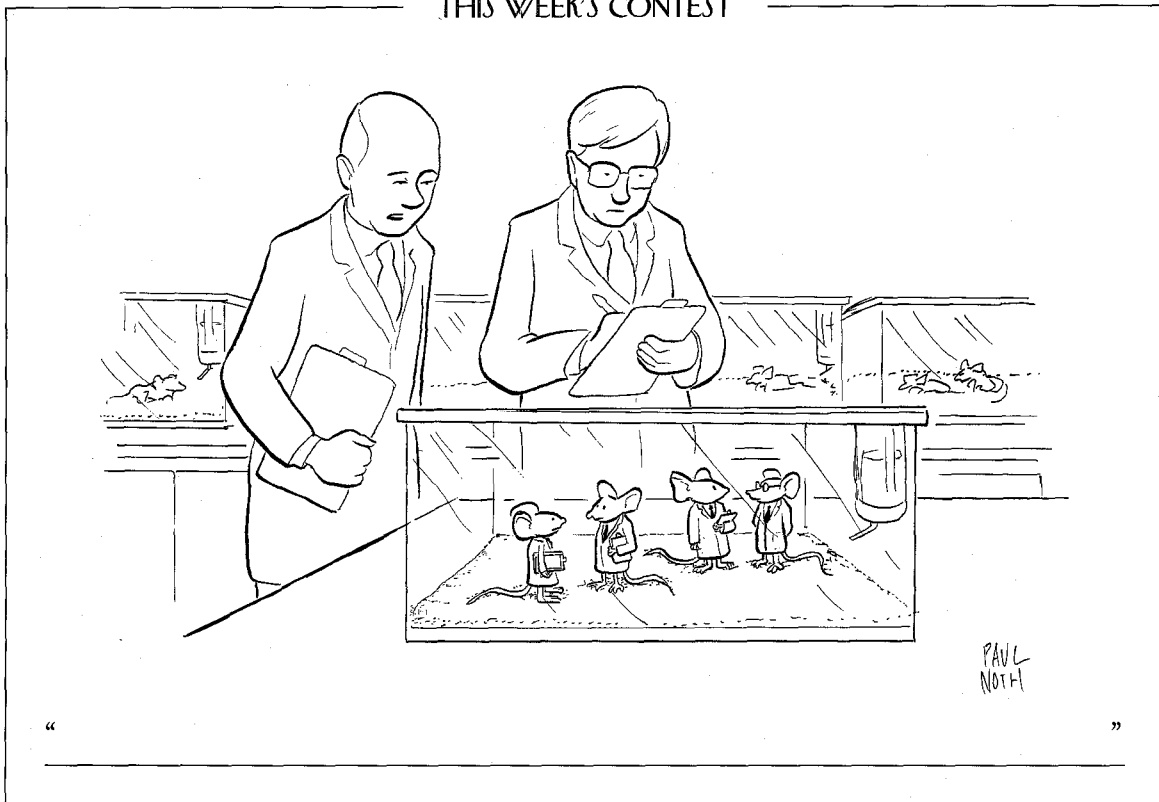
THE FINALISTS

"First, we discuss my percentage of any water you find, real or imagined."
Jeff Joseph, Melville, N.Y.

"Just so we're straight, this is a billable mirage."
Brooks Heintzelman, Wilmington, N.C.

"Impressive audition, but we're going with the camel."
Benjamin Levy, Palm Springs, Fla.

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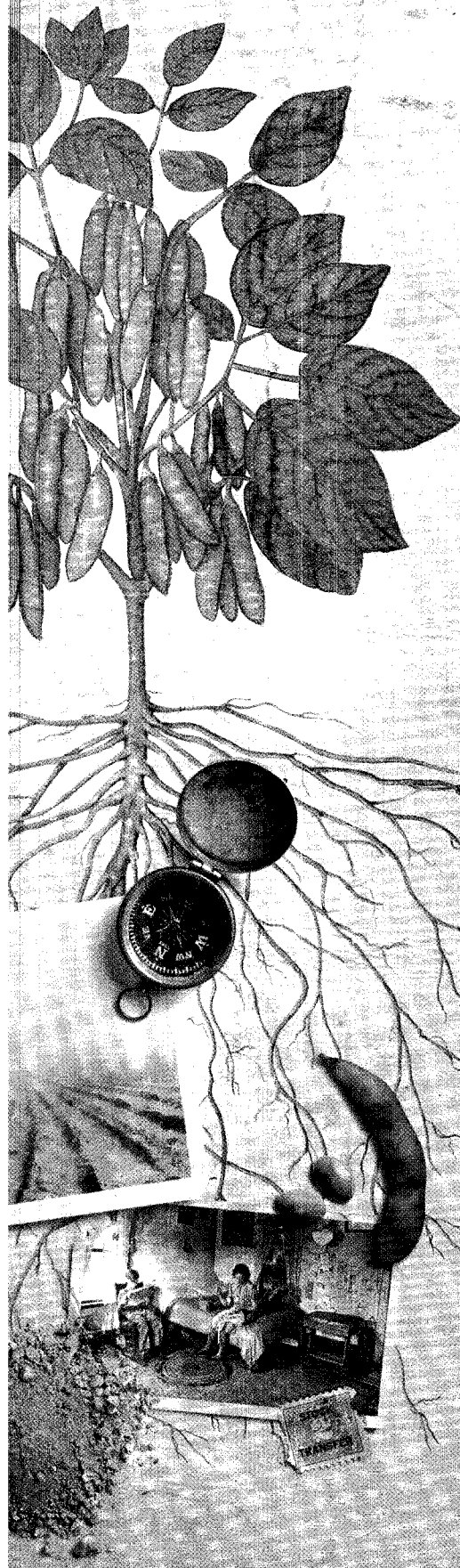


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